

1988
NFL & COLLEGE
FOOTBALL
RATINGS ISSUE

NFL ROOKIE RATINGS: The Future Stars & The Mistakes

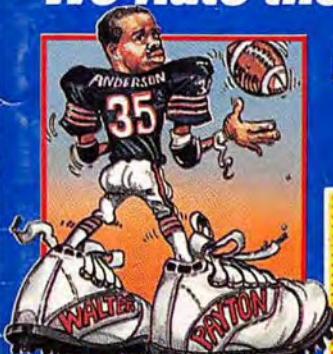
I N S I D E

INSIDE SPORTS

VOLUME TEN

AUGUST 1988 • \$2.50

We Rate the Players, Coaches, Teams—And Much More!



BIG SHOES TO FILL

Neal Anderson
Replaces A Legend
In Chicago

SEC & PAC-10
College Football's
Two Best Conferences

JOE WALTON
The First Coach
To Get Fired?

'88 NFL & COLLEGE FOOTBALL RATINGS &



NOTRE DAME

5 Reasons
To Hate 'Em

BUCS & PATS
The NFL's Toughest
And Easiest Summer
Training Camps

JIM
FINKS

Top NFL Exec

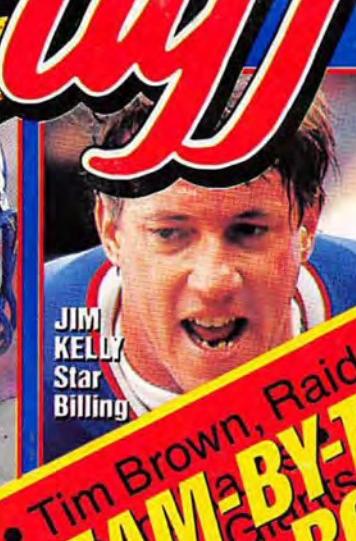
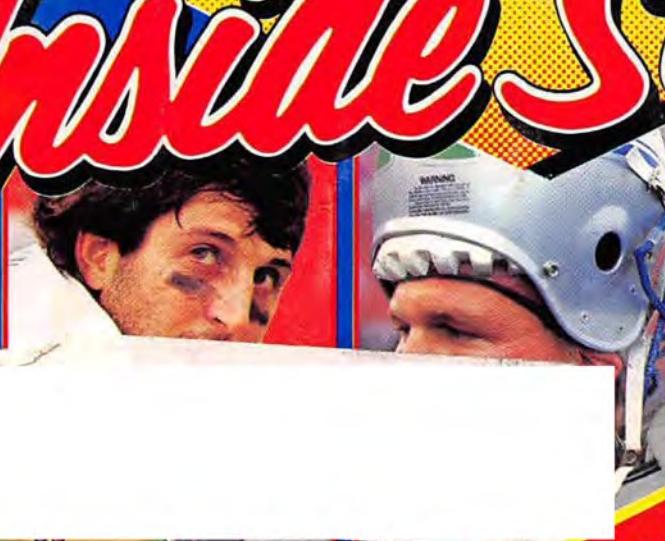
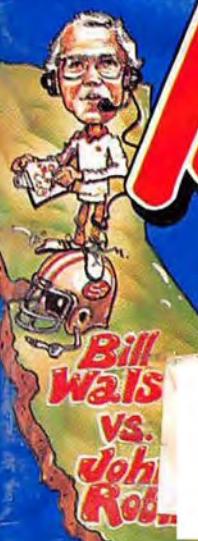
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Make Them Better

BEARS

Key Weaknesses
Will Hurt

Inside Stuff



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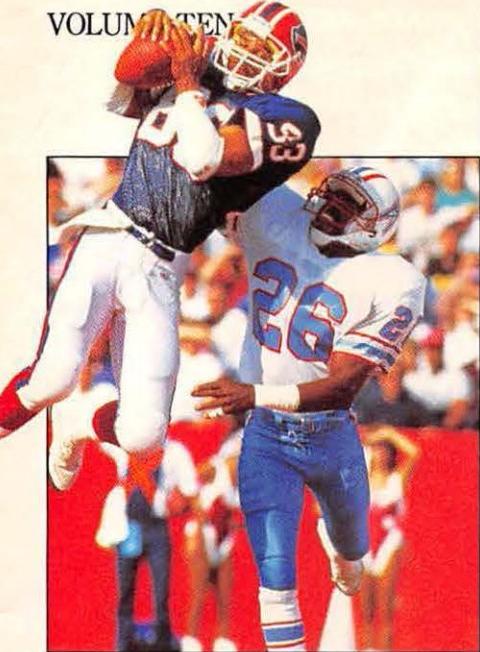
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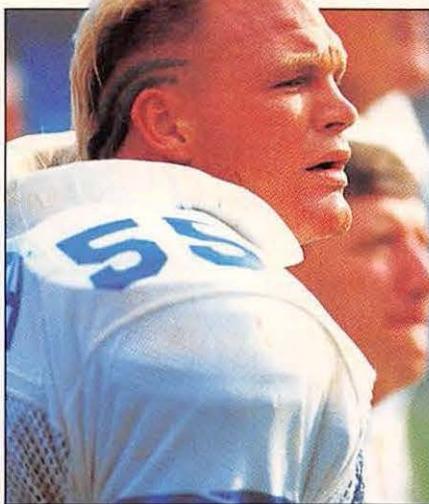
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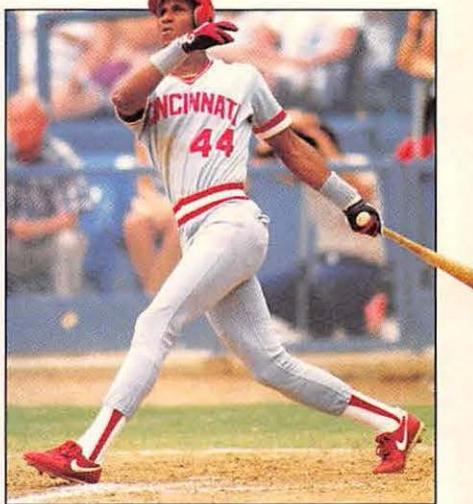
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EDITOR'S NOTE

PRO FOOTBALL PEOPLE HAVE diverse personalities. Learning about them is an intriguing element of covering the game. Who are today's most interesting figures? Start with the Colts' controversial running back, **Eric Dickerson**. Add the Seahawks' off-beat **Brian Bosworth**. Don't forget the Cowboys' soft-spoken but rock-hard coach, **Tom Landry**. And include the Buccaneers' hard-working **Ray Perkins**.

That's the kind of stuff you'll find in our football spectacular—our fourth annual "Football Ratings & Inside Stuff" special section. This 30-page section begins on page 30. We examine the new breed of owners in the NFL. Landry looks back on his most memorable coaching victories. Perkins explains his training camp philosophy. Our examination of the NFL's best individual one-on-one matchups leads us to the game's big-name personalities—such as **Bernie Kosar**, **Karl Mecklenburg**, **Jimbo Covert**, **Dexter Manley**, **Bill Walsh**, and **John Robinson**. Other highlights of our pro football section include author John Delcos' list of players with big shoes to fill, writer Steve Caulk's rundown of the best and worst coaching decisions of 1987, and contributor Bob Kravitz's piece on NFL training camps.

We also talked with two of pro football's top players, who are known for more than just their on-field exploits. Writer Brad Buchholz caught up with Dickerson for a revealing interview that starts on page 24. The former L.A. Rams and SMU star is outspoken about his tenure in Los Angeles, his relationship with Rams coach John Robinson, his reunion with former Mustang coach **Ron Meyer**, and how he compares himself to other great NFL running backs. Writer John Clayton profiles Bosworth, the Oklahoma product who entered the NFL with the reputation of being an outrageous character, a reputation enhanced by his behavior last season. But does

the Boz plan on toning down his act this year? And, more important, what do his teammates think of Bosworth as a person and a player? For the answers, turn to page 66. If that isn't enough pro football

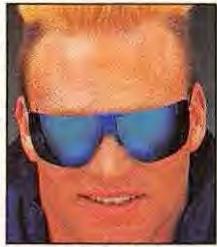
for you, writer Dave Klein's in-depth analysis of the NFL top rookie prospects starts on page 58.

Of course the college game has its share of personalities as well. Writer Mark Elliot profiles four young men who figure to make 1988 the year of the running back in college football—Florida State's **Sammie Smith**, Alabama's **Bobby Humphrey**, Florida's **Emmitt Smith**, and Penn State's **Blair Thomas**. Contributing writer Phil Axelrod examines how coaches prepare for a game. We also rate the conferences, the nicknames, and the recruiting classes, as well as answer some of the big questions concerning college football. Who will replace the '87 seniors? Why we 'love' Notre Dame? Which college team has the most potential '89 draft choices?

On the baseball scene, writer Sheldon Sunness examines the year of the longball, 1987. The '87 home run explosion is an even more intriguing development now that '88 homer productivity is down considerably. Sunness explores the theories for the '87 home run outburst in his story on page 72.

In the "Media" column, contributing editor Bob Rubin looks at minority hiring in baseball broadcasting. The numbers are up, and radio personalities such as WGN's **Dave Nelson** are making a name for themselves.

Actor **Alan Thicke** of TV's "Growing Pains" is this month's celebrity author of "The Fan." Thicke's off-set sports interests often take him to the ice. Find out more on page 82.



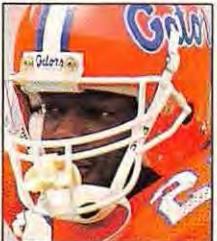
BOSWORTH



MECKLENBURG



DICKERSON



E. SMITH

Michael K. Herbert

THE GRANDFATHER CLAUSE

Knute Rockne III Grapples With History

IT HAS BEEN 57 YEARS SINCE A plane crash near Bazaar, Kan., killed the legendary Knute Rockne, and more than a few inaccuracies have sprouted since then about his life. But by the miracle of modern media, he—or rather, his namesake—sits live in a high school classroom in Midvale, Utah, anxious to correct these historical matters for us.

Regarding Mr. George Gipp, the current Mr. Rockne cannot remember having coached such a player. Neither has Mr. Rockne saddled up a backfield of four "horsemen." Mr. Rockne has never used the single-wing offensive formation, and he has never, ever sat in a locker room near death and told his team to "Go out there and hit 'em! Crack 'em! Crack 'em! Fight to live! Fight to win! Fight to win! Win—win—win!" as he was reported to have said in 1929.

In fact, Mr. Rockne doubts that he could accomplish today most of those things for which he has become so famous.

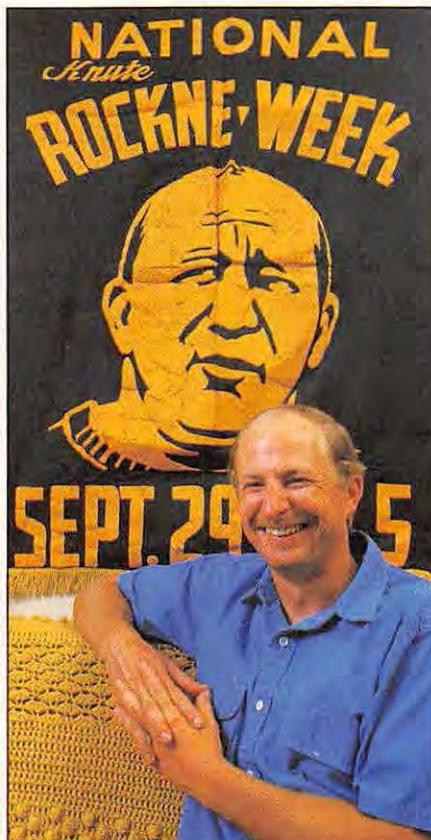
"If there was one quality I wish I had, I wish I was a better motivator," Knute Rockne says. "I just can't get that out of the kids I coach."

Mr. Rockne freely admits he is not among the greatest football coaches in history. He has never even coached a college team. "I am a high school football coach," he says. "I am not my grandfather."

His grandfather, the original Knute Rockne, was the winningest college coach ever (105-12-5, .881). His great teams had five perfect seasons in 13 years at Notre Dame. The current Mr. Rockne, Knute (pronounced KUH-nute) Kenneth Rockne III, is 37 years old. He teaches history until the early afternoon, and then coaches the sophomore football team at Brighton High School in suburban Salt Lake City.

All his life, football has been a siren he could not escape from. Growing up in South Bend, Ind., he yearned to be a receiver for Notre Dame, like his grandfather, and he cried on his father's shoulder the night he realized he wasn't good enough. He realized he could not stay in South Bend—not with that name—so he played football at Utah State, where he was scorned by teammates who resented the publicity generated by his reputation.

He remembers realizing at age seven that he was treated differently, even among his family. His parents waited until three weeks after he was born to name him, weighing the burden against



Knute III lives under his grandfather's imposing shadow.

he were, say, Harold Rockne.

For years he dreamed of returning to Notre Dame Stadium as the head football coach. He no longer has such dreams. He would like to be a good high school coach. He has had seven consecutive winning seasons at Brighton High School. He loves coaching. He enjoys Utah. He and his wife have five children, none of whom they named Knute Rockne IV.

He regrets that decision now.

"We've asked our youngest son, Jonathan, if he would like to take the name," Rockne says.

"It sounds cool," says Jonathan, now 12.

As he approaches 40, the name has become fun. He swears by Notre Dame, wears the school caps and sweatshirts, cheers them on from his living room. The Irish are winning again. On other days, he considers all that he is and he wonders.

"Would he be proud of me?" Knute Rockne asks himself.

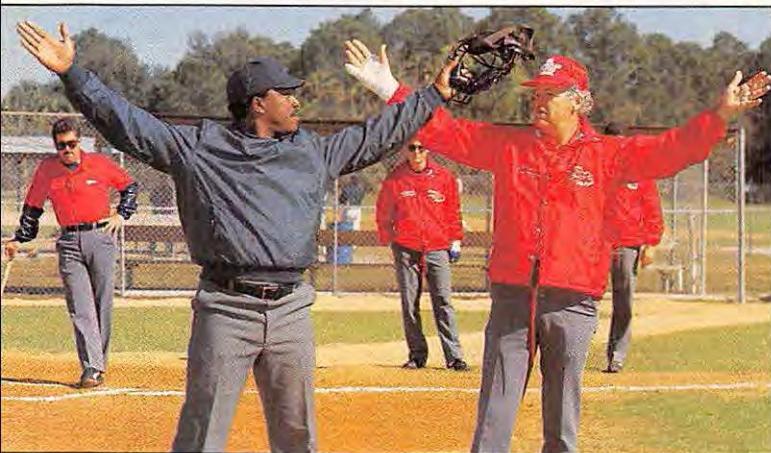
—IAN THOMSEN

SCHOOL FOR STRIKES

Undergraduate Training for Umpires

THERE ARE EASIER WAYS TO MAKE A LIVING THAN being an umpire.

At the lowest professional levels, umps labor through sticky summer months in backwater towns in mostly empty ballparks for



LeFlore struck out, despite Brinkman's help.

players who are as far along as they'll ever get. The pay's not much, and the hours are bad.

If you get real good, and few do, Billy Martin can kick dirt on you while 50,000 fans give their approval while simultaneously raising questions about your mother's ancestry.

People do it, though, and many more people want to, which brings us to the Joe Brinkman Umpire School. Located in Cocoa, Fla., Brinkman's school is one of only two ways an umpire can make it into professional baseball; its twin, the Harry Wendelstedt School in Daytona Beach, is the other. When the minor leagues have an opening, they go to one of these two places to fill it.

"We do the dirty work for baseball," Brinkman said. "They tell us how many they need and we provide. We don't give them anything but the cream of the crop."

Brinkman, an American League umpire since 1973, charges \$1,685 for the five-week course, which runs once a year through late February. He had 140 students this year, including Ron LeFlore. Since the minors were hiring only 19 umps this spring, it was a case of paying your money and taking your chances.

LeFlore, who was a baggage handler for Eastern Airlines in Sarasota before he heard the call, didn't make it. His instincts were those of a player, and he wasn't able to shake them. Instead of anticipating where the throw might go on, say, a pitch hit to right, LeFlore had a tendency to run after the ball. The play would be made at second and LeFlore would be out of position.

"He was about in the middle of the pack," Brinkman said.

Applicants are advised to have a working knowledge of the rules before they get to town. Most do, but they are quickly surprised by what they do not know.

"As a player I thought I knew the rules, but now I know I know them," LeFlore said.

They receive classroom instruction in the morning then to go to one of the complex's four fields at 10:30 for lab work from the 13

instructors on staff, each of whom is a graduate of the school. After a break for lunch, they return to the field for a three-hour session, then get more class work in the evening.

"It is kind of a grind, and we've had some people question why we don't shorten it to a month," Brinkman said. "But there is a lot of pressure out there in the last week, especially for the guys who are close, and we like to see who can hold up under it."

A key part of the final week's instruction is the Abuse Clinic. Staffers take turns getting in the face of the students, seizing on mistakes, or trying to trick or goad them into arguments.

"We want to see how they handle it," Brinkman said.

Each staff member has an equal vote on who advances and who doesn't. For the lucky few who advance, the pay is about \$1,500 a month in the minors, and it will take about eight years to have a realistic chance at making the majors. But even with that Brinkman and his staff take no chances.

"You take a guy like Ronnie [LeFlore]. Everybody here knew him from when he was a player and we liked him," he said. "But you can't let that be a factor. I tell my staff that in each instance they should be very careful who they recommend and who they don't. We might have them on one of our crews one day." —JOE HENDERSON

LISTS

Rating the Best Throwing Arms

IF ANYONE KNOWS A GOOD ARM WHEN HE SEES ONE, IT'S Cubs manager Don Zimmer. He coached for six big-league clubs and managed three others before his return to Chicago this year. Here's how he rates the best arms—past and present—in the American and National Leagues. (Listed alphabetically.)

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Roberto Clemente, Pittsburgh. "Strong arm and very accurate. Very dangerous. You simply didn't send a runner on his arm."

Andre Dawson, Chicago. "Always had a great arm, even though he has had injuries. Very dangerous—particularly on grass surfaces."

Dave Martinez, Chicago. "Think about it: You don't see many left-handed throwers with good arms. Tony Gwynn is good, but no lefthander throws better than Martinez in the league today."

Ellis Valentine, Montreal. "Had some trouble hitting, but had a great arm in right field."

Andy Van Slyke, Pittsburgh. "Right fielders normally have the great arms, but this kid is just as effective in center."

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Jesse Barfield, Toronto. "Known more for his hitting, but he has a great arm. It's difficult to send runners on him."

Rocky Colavito, Cleveland. "Had as strong an arm as anyone, but it wasn't always accurate. When he made a good throw, he got you."

Dwight Evans, Boston. "For a period of about five years, he had as good an arm—accuracy, strength, everything—as I've watched."

Al Kaline, Detroit. "Did so many things well that his arm and its accuracy were overlooked."

Dave Winfield, New York. "One of the best arms around. A tremendous athlete."

By BOB RUBIN

Opportunity in the Broadcast Booth

THE MAJOR LEAGUE owners met in February in West Palm Beach, Fla., and the subject turned to affirmative action, baseball's effort to hire more members of minorities, notably blacks.

The tape of a baseball broadcast was played for them by representatives of the commissioner's office. The play-by-play was crisp, sharp, thoroughly professional.

The owners enjoyed it, but were puzzled. They didn't know why they were listening. Then they were told. The broadcaster's name was Paul Olden. He had been recently hired to do Cleveland Indians games by radio station WWWE. He is black.

The message was clear. The club and station had hired a fine broadcaster, who just happened to be black. It was only one step on a thousand-mile journey facing baseball, but it was a step. It was long overdue, but better late than never. Most encouraging, it wasn't isolated, but part of a movement, however belated, to right glaring wrongs.

The owners were still feeling the effects of the infamous "Nightline" interview with Al Campanis 10 months earlier, when the highly respected veteran Dodgers executive questioned whether blacks had the "necessities" to be managers or general managers. Ironically, Campanis spoke at the beginning of a season Commissioner Peter Ueberroth had dedicated to the memory of Jackie Robinson, 40 years after his historic breakthrough. Doubly ironic, Campanis was a representative of the franchise that had so courageously signed and backed Robinson.

Campanis' remarks shocked the nation.

They revealed a mentality all too common in front offices, and brought into sharp focus just how poor baseball's record was in its treatment of blacks once they were finished playing.

But the remarks may have been the best thing that happened for blacks in baseball since Robinson's profile in courage. They lit a fire. Behind the strong leadership of Ueberroth, baseball at last started to practice what it preached about equal opportunity.

Blacks certainly have shown the "necessities" on the playing field since Robinson's first season, 1947. In 41 years of play in both leagues through last year, blacks had won 32 Most Valuable Player Awards, won or shared 32 home run and 36 batting championships, led in runs batted in 36 times, and in stolen bases 57 times—all this despite being a

small minority (less than 20%) of the playing population.

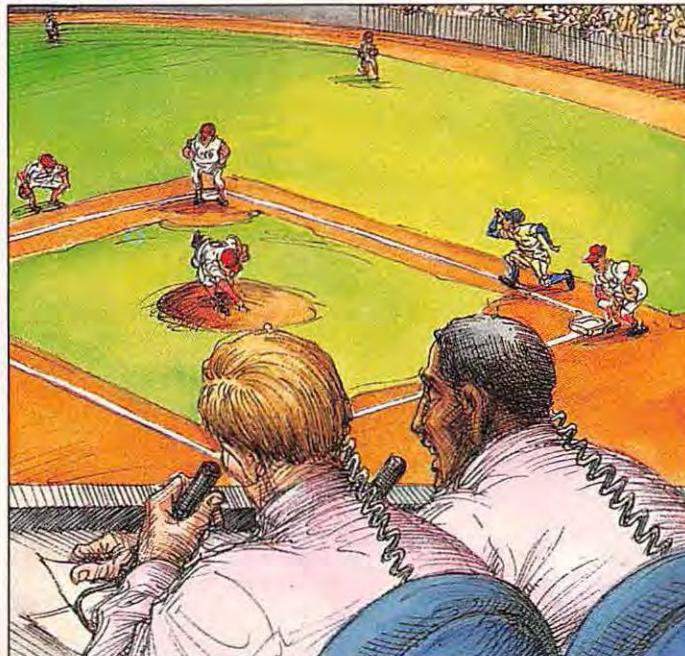
But when blacks retired, they disappeared. They were talented, resourceful, intelligent, and dedicated enough to excel on the field, but were not given a chance to display those attributes in the dugout or front office. Aside from the obvious injustice, it was a terrible waste of talent.

That's changing. There's an old civil rights slogan that applies to what's happening in baseball. It goes, "We ain't where we want to be, we ain't where we ought to be, but, thank God, we ain't where we were." In a one-year period beginning April 1, 1987, just five days before the Campanis episode, 542 people were hired for front office and on-field jobs by the 26 major league teams. One hundred and eighty, or more than 33%, were mem-

bers of minorities.

The front office hires included vice presidents of administrative personnel, communication and finance, and managers of community relations, community services, data processing, financial accounting, human resources, marketing, public relations, and tax accounting.

And broadcasters. At the start of the 1987 season, there were only two black baseball broadcasters, Bill White with the Yankees and Joe Morgan with the Giants, among the 128 men working major league games on English-speaking stations around the country. Now there are seven. Garry Maddox began cable telecasts of Phillies games early last year, and Ken Singleton, who used to work cable for the Orioles, switched this season to the Expos. Billy Sample (Braves



Seven out of the 128 television and radio baseball broadcasters are black—not a lot, but that's five more than a year ago.

TV and radio), Dave Nelson (Cubs radio), and Olden are rookies this year.

Seven out of 128 still isn't very impressive, but it's better than two out of 128.

Because of its high visibility, broadcasting is an important profession for blacks to gain greater representation and acceptance. It makes it easier to break through in other

An ex-player with limited experience behind a mike, Nelson is the prototypical jock-turned-broadcaster, hired for insights and perspective gained in 11 big-league seasons. He didn't chase the job; it found him.

Olden, a Southern Californian, knew he wasn't going to make the majors as a player when he was cut from his high school 'C' team. So he turned to broadcasting. He studied two pretty fair local guys, Vin Scully with the Dodgers and Dick Enberg with the Angels, as well as Joe Garagiola and Tony Kubek on NBC's "Game of the Week."

He wrote to Enberg for advice. He

took a tape recorder and, ignoring the strange looks from fans around him, did play-by-play in the stands at USC, Dodgers, and Angels games.

Olden began his professional career in 1974 as a gofer at a radio station in Los Angeles. In the early '80s, he was doing play-by-play of Spokane games in the Pacific Coast League (Triple-A). Then he went to Las Vegas, where he did UNLV basketball and football, pregame and postgame shows, and

hosted a daily show with basketball coach Jerry Tarkanian.

All the while, Olden had his eyes on the majors. When the storm over Campanis broke, his eyes widened.

"There was a heightened awareness of the need to hire qualified minorities in all areas," Olden said. "I noted that the Phils hired Garry Maddox soon after. I figured if it's ever going to be an advantage to be black, now's the time."

Olden decided to seize the moment. He had a bunch of new 8-by-10 glossies made, bought 100 tape cassettes on which he recorded 10 minutes of his best work, and last August sent them to anyone and everyone—teams, agents, and/or companies that represented broadcasters, TV stations, cable companies, radio stations, etc.

"I wanted to let people know I existed," he said. "Before, I had been very selective about where I applied. I went about the job search wrong."

The Indians got a tape and filed it. Five months later, in January, a change was made in the broadcasting team at WWWE that opened the play-by-play slot alongside popular veteran analyst Herb Score.

Program director Dave Dombrowski says he listened to 50 to 75 tapes, Olden's among them. "We went through the whole elimination process—This guy makes the cut, this

areas, and gives hope to the young and aspiring.

How rookies Olden and Nelson got their jobs is worth examining because they represent both ends of the baseball broadcasting spectrum regardless of color.

Olden, 33, knew what he wanted to do from the time he was 13. He learned his craft, paid his dues, worked his way up from the bottom, vigorously pursued a big-league job, and finally landed one.



guy doesn't.' We got down to 20, then five."

That's when Olden's experience paid off. "He was very well known and well liked on the West Coast," Dombrowski said. "Mike Port, general manager of the Angels, couldn't say enough nice things. In the course of the search, I discovered there are a heck of a lot of guys doing excellent work in the minors who just need a break. Paul was one of those guys."

Did his color help him get the job?

"Not really," Dombrowski said. "We were just looking for the best available talent we could find. With Herb Score, we felt we had the player. What we needed was a good, solid professional broadcaster. It just so happens the man we found is black, but that played no significant part in our decision."

Olden calls life in a big-league booth, "wonderful, everything I thought it would be."

Before landing his job with WGN, Dave Nelson had already risen to a rare level for a black, holding a front-office job with real responsibility. He was minor league coordinator and assistant director of player development for the Oakland A's and, as such, was helping run an instructional league in Santo Domingo last November when he got a fateful phone call from his A's boss, Karl Kuehl.

Kuehl told Nelson the Cubs had asked

permission to talk to him. Assuming it was for a coaching job, Nelson said he wasn't interested. No, Kuehl said, the Cubs want to talk about a broadcasting position.

Nelson was dumfounded. "I had always been interested in broadcasting, but I never thought I'd get an offer at this level because of my lack of a big name and experience."

He had done a 10-minute radio show in Texas when he played for the Rangers in '75; some TV analysis as a member of the Kansas City Royals in '77, his final year as a player; and features and interviews for SportsVision cable in Chicago as a coach with the White Sox in '84. It turns out someone from WGN had caught his work for the Sox and passed it along when the station was looking to replace Jim Frey after Frey went from the booth to the front office as GM.

Nelson was one of 60 to 70 candidates, says WGN program director Lorna Gladstone, who devised a numerical ratings system consisting of 16 criteria, each assigned a certain point value. The list was pared to 30, then down to a half dozen, who were all brought in for interviews.

"To put it bluntly, Dave Nelson just wowed us," Gladstone said. "He was charming, charismatic, and projected an immediate warmth."

His color? "The fact that he was black had nothing to do with it," Gladstone said.

"He's developing well," Gladstone said. "He has no problems that time won't cure."

Like Olden, Nelson figures he was the right man in the right place at the right time.

"Being black might have worked in my favor because of the situation now in the wake of the Campanis thing, but I was not hired by WGN because of my color. I was hired because they were looking for a personality who could relate the baseball experience from the players view."

"I'd be uncomfortable if I thought I was hired because I was black. I wouldn't know what they'd expect from me, how to act. But I'm having a ball. I feel I'm very, very fortunate to be with one of the most recognized teams and stations in the country."

His high visibility should encourage other black players to consider broadcasting when they're through playing, as do their white brethren. Olden's presence should encourage other black youngsters interested in the profession to start talking into tape recorders. Someday, hopefully, a black face in the booth, or the manager's office, or the front office, will be nothing out of the ordinary.

On that day, baseball will truly honor the memory of Jackie Robinson. ■

BOB RUBIN has just finished his fifth year as our "Media" columnist.

SALUTE THE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR.

NEW CITRUS COOLER

New Citrus Cooler just joined the Gatorade All-Star Team: speeding in fluids and minerals, energizing working muscles, and refreshing you with a cool citrus taste all its own.

GATORADE IS THIRST AID FOR THAT DEEP DOWN BODY THIRST.

How is this year's strict interpretation of the balk rule affecting players such as Rickey Henderson, Vince Coleman, Tim Raines, and the other great base-stealers?

J. J., Newark, N.J.

Those great base-runners often are getting to second, and sometimes third, with less effort thanks to the significant increase in balk calls.

But Henderson, despite averaging nearly a stolen base per game during the first month of season, says it isn't all a free ride.

"All those balks could have been stolen bases. But at least I am getting to the next base. It's just not counting toward stolen bases."

"It has to be taken into consideration how many runs I score to show how well I've done, not just how many steals."

Adds Coleman: "They might be taking money from me. I'm paid to steal bases and I won't be getting as many this way."

Because a full, discernable stop in the pitching motion is being required, it changes most of the hurlers' motions. That doesn't help Henderson and company.

"A lot of runners time the pitchers' motions. I do it," Henderson says. "It's the key to getting a good jump and it's a lot harder with them coming to a stop. He can hold it there for a long time and I never know when he is going to come up [and pitch]."

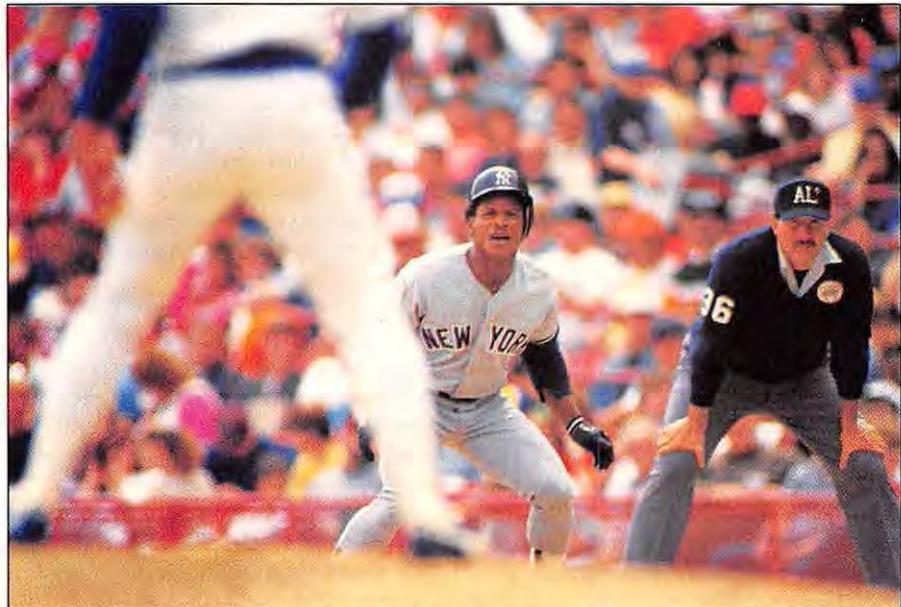
What is Proposition 48 in college sports?

A. L., Montreal

The NCAA enacted Proposition 48 [more properly known as NCAA bylaw 5-1-(j)] in 1986 to ensure that athletes entering college would meet a certain academic standard.

A high school senior has to meet minimum requirements: a score of 700 out of 1,600 on his SAT or 15 out of 36 on the ACT (both are standardized college entrance exams). The athlete also must have in his senior year of high school a 2.00 grade-point average out of 4.00 in a "core curriculum" of 11 courses.

Players who can't meet those requirements have several options. They can accept a scholarship for their freshman year at a major college but must sit out the season and forfeit a year of eligibility. Or they can go to a junior college or NAIA school; neither of those organizations has the same requirement as the NCAA.



How many stolen bases will Henderson lose because of balk calls?

When was the last Summer Olympics that had no boycotts? Why were the last three boycotted? Are any nations boycotting this year's Olympics?

J. T., Chicago

The 1972 Munich Games were the last without a boycott. Those Games, unfortunately, were tragically marred by the murder of 11 Israeli athletes by terrorists.

In 1976 most African nations boycotted the Montreal Games because New Zealand was not barred from competing. Led by Tanzania, the African countries stayed away because a rugby team from New Zealand had toured South Africa. The International Olympic Committee claimed that it had no jurisdiction over where a rugby team went since rugby is not an Olympic sport.

The United States led a boycott of Western nations in 1980, withdrawing from the Moscow Games because the Soviet Union had sent troops into Afghanistan. President Carter ordered the boycott and was supported by most of the U.S. allies.

Britain did not boycott, however, and Englishman Sebastian Coe won the 1,500 meters race, while the 800 went to countryman Steve Ovett.

Four years ago, with the Games in Los Angeles, the Soviet bloc returned the favor, withdrawing because of what was termed

"security risks." The nations that stayed home accounted for 58% of the gold medals won in 1976, but the Los Angeles Olympics were the most heavily attended ever and the biggest financial success.

Is Ohio State the only school to win Division I national championships in football, baseball, and basketball?

D. H. Jr., Hilliard, Ohio

The Buckeyes are the only team that can boast titles in those three sports, winning three football championships, one in baseball, and one in basketball.

Ohio State won the NCAA football crown, as awarded by The Associated Press, in 1942, 1954, and 1968.

The Buckeyes were the baseball champion in 1966, beating Oklahoma State 8-2 in the final game. And they captured the basketball crown in 1960, routing California 75-55 in the title game.

OSU was in the baseball final in 1965, losing to Airzona State 2-1. It was the basketball runner-up to Oregon in 1939, the first year of the NCAA Tournament, and in 1961 and '62, losing both times to Cincinnati. ■

To uncover obscure sport facts, settle wagers, or unravel confusing trivia, send your questions to: Inside Out, 990 Grove Street, Evans-ton, Illinois 60201.

By BRAD BUCHHOLZ

Eric Dickerson

On salary: 'I don't care about others, I got what I'm worth'
On Jim Everett: 'The Rams are trying to rush him too quick'
On Charles White: 'He's good, but he's not in my caliber'

ERIC DICKERSON DIDN'T LIKE what he saw—and said so. The coach was too stern, the regimen too stifling. The dress code was archaic. So Eric Dickerson and several black teammates quit in protest, walking away from the Sealy (Texas) Tigers football team.

The year was 1974. Eric Dickerson was 14 years old.

"I've always spoken up for the things I believed in," Dickerson would say later. "I could never stand being a phony. Sure, you can try to hold things in. But in the long run, it would all come out anyway. So why be a phony?"

Eric Dickerson has always been that way—the smooth, silent runner with the blazing sense of pride. Dickerson always sensed his own greatness, and never tolerated those who stood in his way. Within Dickerson, the talent and the tempest are forever inseparable.

What talent, indeed. In high school at Sealy High, Dickerson set a state record in the 100-yard dash (9.4) and ran reckless over the teams from the neighboring towns of Columbus and Hempstead and Bellville. He once rushed for 235 yards on only seven carries—34 yards per attempt—in a district game against Magnolia High School; his 311 yards in Sealy's Class AA state championship victory over Wylie still stands as a Texas record. As a senior, Dickerson rushed for 2,653 yards in 15 games.

At college at SMU he spent most of his career platooning at tailback with Craig James (now with the New England Patriots)—yet he still managed to shatter Earl Campbell's Southwest Conference career

rushing record. And after only five years in the NFL, Eric Dickerson ranks 10th on the all-time rushing list with 8,256 yards. No runner in pro football history has gained so much yardage so quickly.

The Magnolia Bulldogs, the Texas Longhorns, the Dallas Cowboys—no one has slowed him down. At age 27, Eric Dickerson's talent continues to astound his peers. And so, too, does the tempest.

When Dickerson signed with the Los Angeles Rams in 1983, his salary—\$2.2 million over four years—was the largest in team history. But Dickerson knew he was worth more. He held out for 46 days in 1985, renegotiated a new contract, and then protested a second time in 1987. Rams owner Georgia Frontiere made a strong stand against a second renegotiation; Dickerson demanded action—or a trade.

Consequently, Eric Dickerson is now the highest-paid player in the NFL, making \$5.4 million over the next four years to run for the Indianapolis Colts. His new boss, Colts' owner Robert Irsay, is the same man who drafted Stanford quarterback John Elway ahead of Dickerson in 1983 but could never sign him.

From his office in Los Angeles, Dickerson talks about catching 40 or 50 passes out of the backfield this year. He talks about the quality of the Colts' offensive line, rating them potentially "as good—if not better" than his old line in L.A. He talks excitedly about Jack Trudeau as "the quarterback of our future." He talks about the Rams, and, well, he talks . . .

"There's one thing I think you've learned about me. I'm honest," he says. "I don't pull

punches with anything or anyone. If I don't like it, I'll tell you I don't like it."

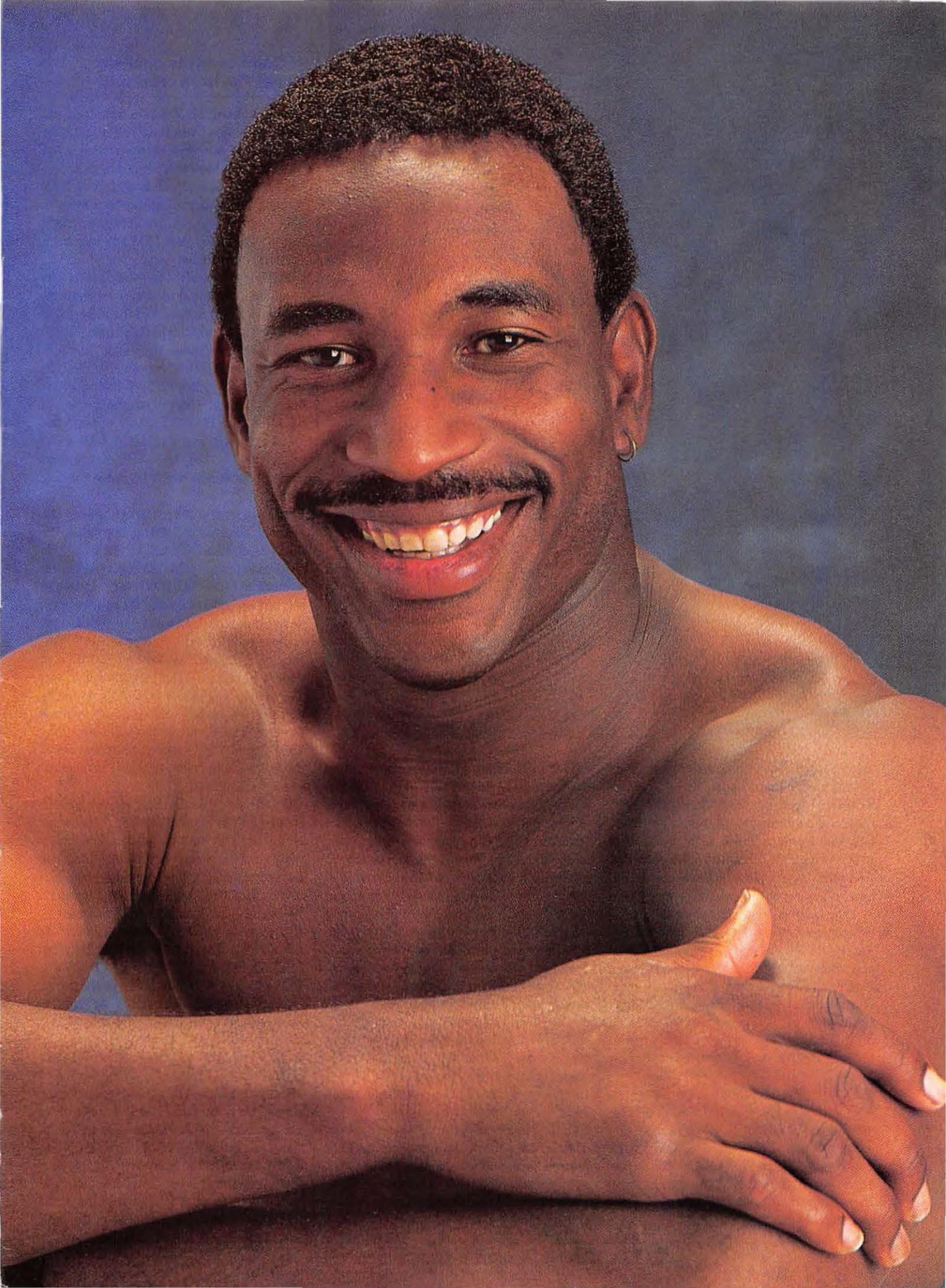
And so he does.

INSIDE SPORTS: How do you compare the atmosphere on the two teams, the Colts and the Rams?

ERIC DICKERSON: The teams are basically the same. And the players on each team are basically the same—good guys, fun guys. I enjoyed playing for the Rams a lot; I liked the players. And I enjoy playing for the Colts and their players. When it comes down to business, which is playing football, they [the Colts] get down to it. But as far as management, it's totally different. With the Rams, they don't put winning first. They put saving money first. Don't get me wrong: I think that's good in a way, because you have to save money if you run a business. But if you want something of quality, you have to pay for it. If you want to own a Rolls-Royce, you can't pay a Volkswagen price. That's one of the things the Rams have to get straight. When it comes to quality players, the Rams just don't want to pay for them—no matter if it's me or someone else. But with the Colts, they want to win first, and that's the biggest difference between the two teams. The Colts really want to win and be respectable. The Rams are almost satisfied just to go to the playoffs every year. It's like, "We haven't made it to the Super Bowl yet, [but] one year we'll make it with the players we have. We're not paying them a lot, but we'll make it." But that won't happen.

IS: That's an interesting viewpoint, consid-

'I'm the best and I want to be paid like I'm the top dog.'





'If God keeps me healthy, I'll get Payton's record.'

they slow down and give him time to learn. You know, when I was there, he would have had time to learn while we were running the ball. Now he'll have to learn on the run.

IS: How do you compare Ron Meyers' NFL coaching philosophy to the way he coached at SMU? [Meyer was Dickerson's coach through his junior year.] Do you recognize anything from the old days?

ED: They're basically the same; Meyer has never been one to get too fancy. He'll always have a trick play or two. And the players like him. He's a players' coach. He's fun to play for and that's what I always liked about him.

IS: That's interesting, considering the controversy surrounding his hard-line approach in New England. [Meyer was head coach of the Pats from 1982 to midway through the '84 season. He was dismissed with a 5-3 record in '84, the first NFL coach fired during a season in which he had a winning record.]

ED: I talked to Andre Tippett, one of the Patriots players, and asked him what the deal was up there. He said he liked Ron. He went on to tell me some of the problems, but to me, Ron Meyer is a good coach. I like him as a person and as a coach. There are always people who aren't going to like you. I know not everyone likes me or the way I do things, the way I handled my contract. But I got it done, and that's all that's important to me. The same thing goes for Ron Meyer. They may not like the way he does things, but he's coaching a good, quality football team now.

IS: What about the more subtle aspects of the Rams-Colts trade. Artificial turf versus grass, for example.

ED: Turf is no big deal; I played on it in college. In fact I kind of like turf. I feel faster on turf, and my cuts are quicker. I can make tacklers miss more easily on turf and I can accelerate quicker. The only thing about turf is you can get caught in it and have an injury. We practice on grass; that helps in a way.

IS: How about the personal aspects? Is there a lot of jetting back and forth between L.A. and Indianapolis?

ED: I look at it as like being in the movie industry. You make a movie for six months, and then you're back home for six months. It's just business. It's work. And when my work is over, I come back home to enjoy California.

IS: Charles White had a great season for the Rams. Do you think it was a case of an average back excelling behind a great line, or was it something more?

ED: Charlie had a good year, really. But there's one thing: It was a strike season, and he played three games with the strike team. And those were great games: 170-, 180-yard

ering the criticism Colts owner Robert Irsay has taken for being cheap.

ED: That's true. But I didn't know a lot about the Colts until this year. His son, Jim Irsay, has more leeway with the team now. I went to school [at SMU] with Jim; he's a good guy. And with a guy like Jim, he wants to win. You have to pay players in order to win. And Jim is willing to do that. If you want quality players, you have to make that commitment. There's no way around it. Look at the Redskins, acquiring Wilber Marshall. They paid for him. . . . Now, I know a lot of players gripe about wanting more money—and some don't deserve it. I believe you have to produce first. It's funny, the Rams told me I had to produce another year. I produced every year I played there!

IS: You've played pro football at L.A. for John Robinson, a former coach at USC, and now you're back with Ron Meyer, the man who aspired to build SMU into the "USC of the Southwest Conference" in the late 1970s. Obviously, both men emphasize tailbacks in their programs. Any reflections on the two coaching styles?

ED: John Robinson is the type who wants to run the football, to play ball control. [But] he doesn't know how to open it up. John wants to play ball control the whole game, and sometimes that can cost you when you play too conservative. Ron Meyer knows how to mix it up a little bit—he'll run it and he'll throw it. If you have a situation where a team is difficult to run against, he'll throw against them. Or he'll run and pass, mixing it up. And that's the difference between the two coaches. John has always had those big offensive linemen at USC that we never had at SMU. And USC could just run over people: Student Body Right, Student Body Left. You can do that in college, but you just cannot continue to do that in the pros and win consistently.

IS: A lot was said of Jim Everett's potential. What did you think of him?

ED: Jim has a lot of potential, he really does. They tried to rush him too quick. They started saying he was another Dan Marino or John Elway, and those are big shoes to fill. I don't know if he's that type of quarterback. But he can be a very good quarterback, if

'Give me one full season and I'll lead the league again.'

games. And that helps. It gives any back a jump. It gave him a big jump on me . . . which is good. I'm happy for Charlie. But any back can do well behind a good offensive line. But to do great—that's a different thing. Charlie's a good back, but he's not in my caliber. I'll tell you, I'll tell Charlie, I'll tell John Robinson that. I have nothing to hide when it comes to that, about sticking my talent up against any other back in the league. Charlie's not my caliber running back. Charlie ran behind that line in practice, and then he ran behind it when I didn't play, all year long. And I went to a totally different team. And I still did very well. I know a lot of people were hoping I'd fall on my face, but I fooled a lot of them. Like I say: Give me a whole season with [the Colts]. One full season. And I'll lead the league again.

IS: There was a lot of upbeat talk after the Rams hired Ernie Zampese as their new offensive coordinator last year. Did his ideas have any impact?

ED: Oh, the Rams tried to do some things. They tried. They had the ideas, some new passing. But now they have to put them into effect because they don't have a big running back. They don't have a guy who'll take it 70 or 80 yards or someone who will let them keep the ball for most of four quarters. So now, they'll have to put that new offense into effect. Before it was mostly a smoke screen.

IS: With the trade, which followed the highly publicized contract dispute, last year must have been quite an experience.

ED: Well, no matter what they say, no one can say I'm not a good football player. They can say I'm greedy. They can say, "He acts like a child because he wants more money." Whatever. But I'm a good football player, and no one can say any different. Put yourself in my shoes. If you're a writer, and you feel like you're the best, you want to be paid like the best writer. You don't want to be paid like the guy who delivers mail or brings the paper into the office. You want to be paid top salary. And that's what I feel like. I want to be paid like I'm the top dog. And I know I'm the best in the business right now. To me, there's no doubt about that. You can say that I'm arrogant. But that's not arrogance—that's just honesty. When I'm gone, and my career is over with, I can't say, "I was the best then." Other players will have moved in, and they will have forgotten me. It's all over. Ali was always one of my great heroes because he said he was the best and he went out and proved it every time he fought. There was no doubt he was the best. And I feel I'm the best.

IS: When you were not on the field with the Rams during your contract troubles, did you



sense resentment, or did some of your peers respect you more for going out and getting what you thought you were truly worth?

ED: About half of them said, "I'm glad you got it. I respect you for what you did." To me, I had to do it. It was not something that could wait until "next year" or "the year after that." Football's not a game that allows you to say, "I'll just wait it out for two or three years, and then I'll be making the big money." You just don't have that leeway. In football, you can play three years and your career is over. You have to get it now, while you can.

IS: Are you saying most of the Rams respected you more when all was said and done?

ED: I think so. You always have guys on both sides of the fence; they have to try to play up to the management. But most of the guys on that football team weren't happy about their contracts. At least 85 to 90% of them weren't happy. They just didn't have the guts to speak up. That's the difference between me and a lot of other players I played with.

IS: Those who support the position of Rams management would certainly mention the intangibles. Let's assume the Rams did not pay you fairly. But what about the satellite dish the Rams bought your aunt in Sealy, so she could watch you play each week? How do you respond to that?

ED: I went to see John Robinson when all this was going on. Now, he may not like this, but you can print it just like I said it. I said, "Look, John. I didn't ask Georgia [Frontiere, the team owner] for a satellite dish. I didn't ask her for the furniture that she bought for my house. I didn't ask for any of those things. All I've asked for is more money in my contract. I'm just like you and all these other

guys around here. I like money. But y'all figure, 'Give this guy a satellite dish, give this guy's momma some furniture, and then he'll be happy. He'll keep quiet.'" Well that's not the kind of thing I like. I told them I wanted money. I was talking about money the whole time. I said, "If you pay me right, I'll go buy my own satellite dish." And if they want their satellite dish back, I'll gladly ship it back to them. I got the money to buy 10 satellite dishes.

IS: Early in your career, you said Los Angeles was the one place you really wanted to play. Is there a feeling of remorse that it didn't work out?

ED: No. I still live here in L.A. I'm glad to be rid of the team I was playing with. But other than that, I like Los Angeles. I like the city. I like living here. I like Indianapolis also. The [Indianapolis] fans are more . . . fans. More into the game. They don't boo you if something goes wrong or doesn't go their way. Or if you lose a game, they don't boo you off the field. Out here, in Los Angeles, they only want winners. They love you when you win and they hate you when you lose.

IS: You attempted to renegotiate your contract several times with the Rams. What was the problem? The Rams? Your agent? Or was nothing wrong at all?

ED: Everything went wrong. Sometimes it was agents, sometimes it was the Rams . . . I only really renegotiated my contract with the Rams once. And then I tried the second time. After the first time, I told them they were going to have a problem with me again—because I really didn't like the deal I got. But they said that was all they were offering at the time, and I could either take it or leave it. And I said, "I'll take it for now . . ."

IS: Your original contract might appear obsolete now—yet it was the biggest in their history, \$2.2 million over four years.

ED: And it was obsolete, like you say.

IS: It's interesting the way last year turned out. The players went on strike but could never negotiate a satisfactory settlement. In a sense, you went on strike, too—but you were the only person who really got what he was after last year.

ED: I got what I wanted last year. I'm satisfied with what I have. They can go out and pay a player \$8 million now. I don't care what they pay [someone else] because I got what I think I'm worth. They don't have to worry about me holding out now. All I asked of the Rams was to pay me fairly. Pay me in the ballpark of a Dan Marino, a John Elway. Just stay in the ballpark. [But] I was making less money than my head coach. I was making less money than a lot of defensive backs. To me, that was a joke.

IS: You've accomplished so much in five years. Earl Campbell—another Texan—started out with five great years, but he paid a high physical price for them. It seems you're at a peak after five years, while he had already begun to decline.

ED: Earl's a different type of runner. I don't take those punishing hits that Earl had to take. Earl was the type where he had to run over people. Earl was a great runner. I liked Earl's style. But it's not my style. I'm more elusive. I will run over you if I have to, but I don't prefer that.

IS: You run with a lot of pride. Earl took such great pride in running his way, aggressively, and it cost him in the long run.

ED: A lot of players on defense say that I don't like to get hit. But to me, it takes a damn fool to run over a guy like Richard Dent or Refrigerator Perry. And I'm not a fool. I like to think I'm a smart football player. I'd like to come back and fight another day.

IS: Have you always been very conscious of taking care of yourself?

ED: I've always tried to be known as someone who is very durable—and very productive. You can have all the talent in the world but not be productive. I'm a very consistent football player. I'm not a guy who's going to gain 100 yards one week and then go 30, 20, and then 100 again over the next few weeks. I try to have 100 every week.

IS: Considering your good health, is Walter Payton's all-time rushing record [16,726 yards] something you think about?

ED: No, I don't really think about it. I don't sit down and calculate exactly how long it will take me to get it. If God keeps me healthy, and I keep playing, I'll get that record.

IS: You obviously care about maintaining a certain level of performance. Do you see

yourself at age 33 playing at the level you're playing now. Is it possible?

ED: It's very possible. I'd like to play 11 years. That's a goal. In 11 years, I think I could do everything I wanted to do in this league, and then step out. And hopefully still be young and have a smile on my face.

IS: You've heard the quirk in NFL history: The league rushing leader never plays for the team that wins the Super Bowl.

ED: That's true, but you'll never see a team win the Super Bowl that's strictly a passing football team. Never. And that's why the Broncos didn't win: because the Redskins could run and throw. You've got to do both if you want to win the Super Bowl. And that's why the NFC has won the Super Bowl the last few years, because they could do both things. The year the Raiders won it, they ran the football and they passed the football.

IS: You said a few years ago: "I'm a normal person with normal tastes. I don't want to be a superstar. I don't have that kind of ego." Does that sound familiar?

ED: Yeah. I'm still the very same person. I don't go around with a big 29 stamped on my chest, saying "I'm Eric Dickerson. You don't know me?" That's not my style. If I introduce myself to a young woman, I'm just plain Eric. Now if she happens to know what I do, that's fine. But I don't go around trying to impress people. I do buy things that I like; that's just

me. But I would never buy a boat just because all my rich friends have boats.

IS: It's a long way from Sealy, Texas, to 2,000-yard seasons in the NFL. Have you thought about how your life has changed?

ED: Somewhat, yeah. I know the world's a jungle. And if you want something, you have to take it. That's the way it is. If you want to be on top, nobody's going to give it to you. And it's hard to stay on top. I know that. And you can't trust anyone, either. I know that, too. Everyone who smiles at your face is not necessarily your friend.

IS: Do you feel any sense of vindication? You went to the Colts, had a good season, became accepted in a new place. And in Los Angeles they were aware of your absence.

ED: Of course. They can say whatever they want—but I know the Rams organization wanted to see me do badly with the Colts. They can lie and say they didn't, but I know they did. Just to say, "See? I told you so! He can't do it unless he's behind our big offensive line." Well, I never said I wanted to see them do bad, but I didn't want to see them do good, either. I don't believe they'll be pulling for me when we play them in a game. And I wish we were playing them this year. ■

BRAD BUCHHOLZ is a Texas-based author who has won national feature writing awards the past two years. This is his first piece for I.S.

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We tell you why the Bills are heading up and the 49ers heading down, why Ray Berry is a softie, which is Tom Landry's greatest victory, how an Air Force Academy student/athlete spends his day, why we 'love' Notre Dame, what are the best matchups [such as Manley vs. Covert], and much, much more . . .

DEXTER MANLEY VS. JIMBO COVERT

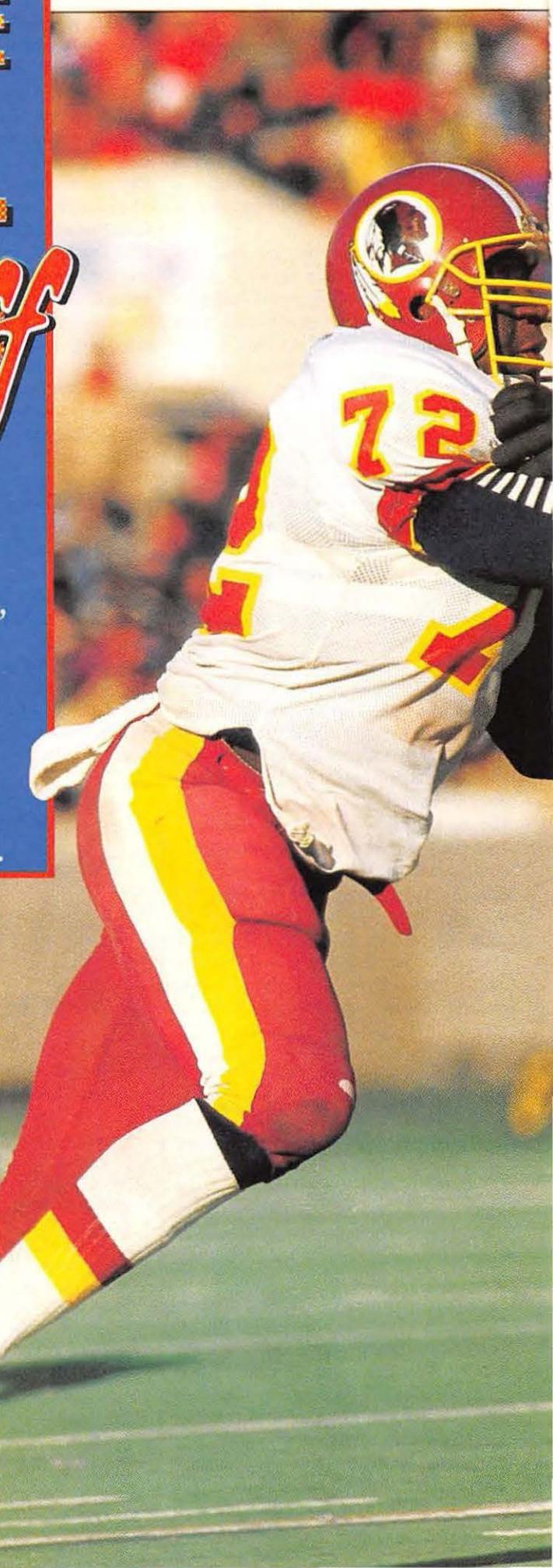
Matchups between offensive left tackles and defensive right ends are often critical because that's where teams put their best pass-blockers and best pass-rushers. Mismatches can decide games. Bears offensive tackle Jim Covert and Redskins defensive end Dexter Manley have met three times—in divisional playoff games following the 1984, 1986, and 1987 seasons. Manley's scorecard for the three games: seven tackles, three assists, one sack. The Redskins have won two of the three, including last year when the Redskins arrived in Chicago in time to watch Bears coach Mike Ditka reiterate on his television show his opinion that Manley had "the IQ of a grapefruit." Not long after the game, Covert underwent surgery to repair a fracture of his left shoulder, an injury he had endured all season.

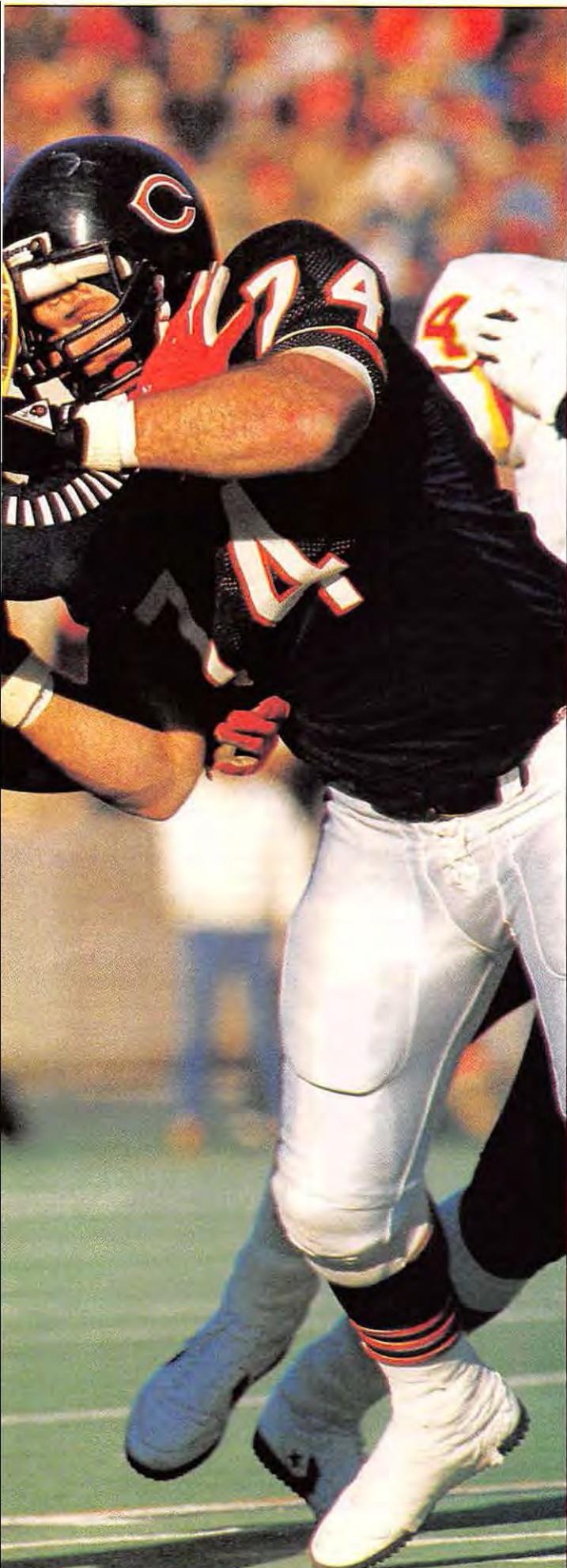
MANLEY: There are different levels of players. Jimbo Covert is at another level. It doesn't matter who I'm playing, but when I come up against Covert, the thing I have to do is watch film. I watch his steps, the way he likes to set, how he opens up, whether he has a good, low drive block.

On the field the most important thing for me is always to watch the ball, watch the ball, watch the ball. If I can key the ball, nine times out of 10 I'll have an advantage because of my quickness.

Covert is kind of bulky. He's strong and has excellent feet. Sometimes if I get upfield, a guy like Covert is back there setting on me. I think, 'I've got to mix it up.'

When someone I see beats an offensive tackle, I ask myself 'How did he do it? What mistakes did the tackle make? What did





Manley has totaled one sack in his last three duels with Covert.

the tackle bite on? What move did that offensive tackle take? Did he punch and set back and get his butt low, or did he try to be overaggressive? Say he gets beat inside. I say, 'Aha.' So I'll run my ass off to the outside and come back inside. I scare him outside, because no offensive tackle wants to get beat on the outside. So I run hard outside, like I'm not going to do anything else. Next thing you know, I just spin back inside. I can recall Jimbo Covert has stopped me on that particular move.

What Mike Ditka said before our last game [about Manley's IQ] didn't faze me. Maybe that was a way to motivate Covert. But he should have gone to Jimbo and said, 'Hey, I'm doing this.' Maybe Jimbo said it wasn't a problem. But if I were Jimbo I think he [Ditka] would owe me some answers.

Last year [in the Redskins' playoff victory] I know I beat him a couple times and he was holding me a lot; that's the first time I could say Jimbo Covert was holding. In the fourth quarter we were leading by four and they were inside our 20. I had a great rush and I beat Jimbo around the corner. I hit McMahon in the head, and he threw an interception to Barry Wilburn in the corner.

I can recall one pass play [in the playoff game in 1986] when Covert stuffed me and I fell down. I couldn't believe it. I was embarrassed because I knew those two little eyes were watching on the video camera. Then there was a third-and-two on the goal line. Jimbo was supposed to block me, but I beat him and I threw Walter Payton for a loss. I came back and redeemed myself. There were a lot of ups and downs for the both of us. I think he's the best tackle in the game. It's between him and the kid from Minnesota, Gary Zimmerman. Luis Sharpe of the Cardinals is the best pass-blocker.

COVERT: If a guy has a certain thing he does well, like play the run, I'll concentrate extra hard that week on my run-blocking. If he's a really good pass-rusher, I'll concentrate extra hard on that. If he's like [former Tampa Bay Buccaneers defensive end] Lee Roy Selmon, who was excellent at both of them, you have to work extra hard on every facet.

What Dexter does well is rush the passer. I look at passing downs a lot [on film] and see how he tries to rush against certain people on different downs. I'll also find out on which downs they stunt. The Redskins stunt a lot.

Washington gears their guys to rushing the passer. That's all they do. Their theory is if they can get to the quarterback, they're going to hurt you.

Dexter lines up the same way every time, as wide as he can possibly get. If he could line up the stands, he would.

Offensive linemen always have to back up and block people. You have to hit them, absorb the blow, hit them again, absorb the blow. And this is while you're going backward. And he's in a sprinter's stance running as fast as he can to the quarterback. So it's hard. The hardest thing is to block a wide rusher; Dexter's really good at rushing wide.

What Ditka said last year didn't bother me. Talk is cheap. When you're trying to prove how good you are every Sunday, you're not really worried about what somebody says. He might fire someone up a little extra, but my goodness, if you're not fired up, you shouldn't be out on the field. That's a playoff game and you're trying to go to the Super Bowl. It might make him twice as fired up, but you better be at that level, too.

He wouldn't have said that if he didn't think I could handle it. He wasn't thinking when he said it and maybe it was unjustified, but he probably thought I could handle it or he wouldn't have said it.

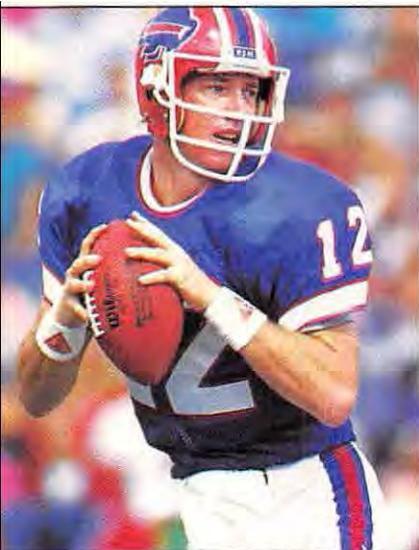
Dexter might have thought he had a hand on McMahon on that interception last year, but he didn't. No way he got to him. He made a great play against Walter on the goal line in '86. They had a stunt where everybody went to the outside. When he stunted, he stunted right into the play because we were running a sweep outside. I couldn't have hooked him if I had a hook.

I try to concentrate on everybody the same way. Obviously, in the back of your mind, if you're playing against a Dexter Manley on Sunday, you know that if he beats you for a sack, it's going to be that much more magnified. If Joe Schmoe beats you, you're going to feel bad and work your butt off to keep it from happening again, but the guy up in the [television] booth and the coach aren't going to say as much about it. But if Dexter beats you, he's going to tell somebody about it, obviously, and the guy in the booth will say what a great play he made and it will embarrass you even more. You're going to work harder against guys like that subconsciously.

Dexter got so much better between 1984 and 1986 it was unbelievable. He was really coming off the ball. A lot of times you don't see that in players. A guy might be good, but he will level off. Dexter got better.

—As told to DON PIERSON

FOOTBALL RATINGS & Inside Stuff



Kelly's Bills are the fastest-rising young team in the AFC.

TEAMS ON THE UPSWING

1. San Francisco. A 13-2 regular season can't hide the fact that, for the third straight season, things didn't pan out for the 49ers in the playoffs. Punched out in round one by New York the previous two years, the 'Niners were no match for a physical, cold-weather team. But how do you explain the 36-24 loss at home in January, to Minnesota, 10½-point underdog out of the soft NFC Central?

Worse yet, the setback hastened a power struggle between owner Edward DeBartolo Jr., a fan of quarterback Steve Young, and coach Bill Walsh, a Joe Montana supporter. Together, Walsh and Montana have won two Super Bowls in the '80s, but Eddie D. apparently won't allow success to stand in his way. He promptly stripped Walsh of the club president's title and shopped Montana around the league. "I told Joe that the chemistry needed to be changed," says Walsh of his decision to pull the veteran QB against Minnesota. Somehow, there seemed to be a dual message there.

2. Chicago. Has it really been three seasons since the big, bad Bears mauled New England in an XX-rated Super Bowl? Yep. But some funny things happened to this team on the way to becoming the

TEAMS ON THE UPSWING

1. Buffalo. Outside linebacker Cornelius Bennett has changed not only the game face of the Bills defense but the state of the AFC as well. His midseason trade from Indy allowed Shane Conlan to move to the inside spot. By Week 16—Bennett flattened Philly with 17 tackles, four sacks, and three forced fumbles—the Bills had offenses eating their dust despite six new starters.

Now it's the offense's turn to play catch-up. Until he gets an all-purpose running back and a long-ball threat at wide receiver, quarterback Jim Kelly will be stuck on semiautomatic. The expected return of injured running back Robb Riddick adds a weapon. Without the top two picks it took to acquire Bennett, general manager Bill Polian will have to deal for a wideout. In the meantime he can rest assured that help is as near as his QB.

2. Philadelphia. Perhaps no team was helped more by the players strike than the Eagles. While other head coaches played con men, cantankerous Buddy Ryan shrewdly treated non-union games for what they really were—shambles. Small wonder then that while management did a slow burn, unity among coaches and the Eagles players—the *real* Eagles—was never better. It showed on the field, where Philly finished 7-5 in union games, only one game behind Washington.

3. Detroit. Raise your hand if you've heard this before: Team Upswing is loaded with young talent, particularly on defense, has several top draft picks to boot, enters the season with high expectations, and . . . finishes 4-11. Uh-huh, thought so. So why pick the Lions, destiny's orphans? Because parity—make that mediocrity—in the NFL leaves little to choose from in finding a third improving team. The other reason is player personnel chief Jerry Vainisi, the heir apparent to GM Russ Thomas.

Vainisi may be the no-bull guy the Lions have long needed to clean up their act—he has already called his players "a classic group of underachievers" and questioned coach Darryl Rogers' commitment to winning. Then there's the score to settle with Bears president Michael McCaskey, whose Fridge-sized ego prompted him to fire Vainisi. Jerry's Kids could be a greatly improved team.

—PAUL LADEWSKI

THE BEST ATHLETES NOBODY WANTS

1. Mark Haynes, Broncos. When the cornerback announced last January that he had just completed a season as solid as any of his three Pro Bowl years, the Broncos couldn't find any takers. They finally understood why the Giants let him go for two second-round draft choices.

2. Mossy Cade, Packers. When the cornerback finishes his prison term for sexual assault, he won't have a job waiting for him. The Packers have decided to trade Cade—if they can get any takers. So far, no nibbles.

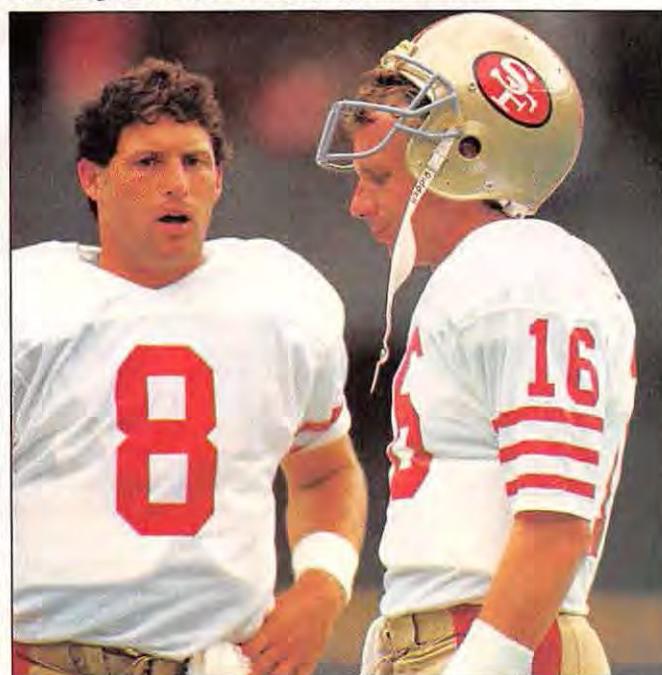
3. Irving Fryar, Patriots. The Pats claim they still like this wide receiver, but admit his personal antics have tried their patience. They will listen to trade proposals, but the only club that might be interested is the nearest gun club.

4. Tony Dorsett, Cowboys. His salary (\$750,000 yearly) makes him hard to like. While most observers agree he has at least one or two good years left, there is some debate over whether he would be worth the investment. —STEVE CAULK

NFL's next dynasty. Defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan skipped town. QB Jim McMahon got hurt again. And running back Walter Payton got old—finally—on the way to Canton. Say, but weren't they the three Bears whom Chicago could least afford to lose?

With the loss of Pro Bowl linebacker Wilber Marshall and the gains made by NFC Central opponents, the Bears can no longer count on seven or eight intradivisional wins. Last season Minnesota came within a goal-line offense of winning the division. Detroit could

The Young-Montana controversy typifies the 49ers' turmoil.



be markedly improved. The Bays can't be much worse. The next time we see Mike Ditka on TV in January, look for the Bears boss to be snooping around the kitchen in search of another souper bowl.

3. New York Jets. If you need a symbol for the Jets' aborted takeoff, look no further than Mark Gastineau. Once one of the NFL's feared pass-rushers, Gastineau has sacked little more than Brigitte Nielsen in recent years. Teammates spat on him and pelted him with eggs when he crossed the picket line during the '87 strike. Considering his \$825,000 price tag, the Jets must wonder if Gastineau has left some egg on *their* faces as well.

Joe Klecko, Joe Fields, Barry Bennett, Gordon King, and Dave Jennings have been released to make way for youth, but the Jets still have many of the same old problems. Joe Walton was one of several head coaches who alienated their players during the strike. For the second successive season under Walton's leadership, the Jets led the NFL in penalties. Their offensive and defensive lines combined for the league's worst sack differential. By the end of this season, the Jets may look nothing like the team that won 11 games only three seasons ago.

—P.L.

A DOZEN SUPERSTITIONS

Most football players won't walk under a ladder, especially if William Perry is teetering on the top rung. Most football players would throw salt tablets over their shoulder for luck. Most football players would believe in the rhyme, "Don't step on a crack or your team gives up a sack."

Football players, generally, are a superstitious lot.

Here are examples from 12 NFL teams of superstitious players. We were going to offer examples from 13 teams, but you know about the number 13.

1. Bills. Joe Devlin doesn't like it when people mess with his helmet. One day one of the equipment guys changed the decals and stripes on it. Devlin was so outraged, and so superstitious, that he beat the helmet against the wall so it looked the same as before.

2. Bears. Tom Thayer is so worried somebody will beat him to the locker room on game day he arrives four hours before kickoff. Steve McMichael walks on the field in street clothes 2½ hours before game time, and linemates Dan Hampton and Richard Dent always go on the field together.

3. Bengals. Under his uniform, James Brooks has to wear the same T-shirt with a bare midriff and the sleeves cut off. Not much of a superstition, you say? "You don't find much superstition on a team that wins four and loses 11," equipment manager Tom Gray says.

4. Broncos. John Elway likes to wear the same T-shirt under his uniform, but he doesn't get as carried away as Mike Harden, who gets frantic if equipment manager Dan Bill isn't around to fill up his helmet with air before every game.

5. Oilers. Ernest Givins insists on being the only Oiler who wears eight-inch wristbands. "If anybody else gets them he says he won't have a good game," equipment manager Gordon Batty says. "I have to hide them from everybody else."

6. Raiders. It's not like the old days, when Fred Biletnikoff would make sure he threw up before every game and kept a penny in his shoe, but Matt Millen has worn the same ratty T-shirt under his uniform for years. There are at least eight holes in it, according to estimates.

7. Rams. Jim Everett has to have a football put in his locker in the exact same way before every game: laces down. It goes back to when he had a broken finger and couldn't do it himself. Sean Miller won't take the

field before a game unless team doctor Bob Kerlan ties his shoes for him.

8. Vikings. Offensive tackle Tim Irwin goes to a tailor to have his jersey altered, and his day is ruined unless equipment manager Dennis Ryan helps him get into it just right. Irwin complained all season that his home jersey never fit correctly. "The white one was good, the purple [home] one stunk," Irwin said. Said Ryan: "He wanted to wear his white jersey at home as well as on the road."

9. Saints. Defensive back Dave Waymer and offensive lineman Stan Brock won't leave the locker room until equipment manager Dan Simmons has helped them put on their jerseys. "I have to tuck in their shirts. It's like sending a kid off to school," Simmons said. "I make sure they've got their lunch pail and everything is all ready so they can catch the bus."

10. Giants. If there was a coach of an All-Superstitious Team, it'd have to be Bill Parcells. He'll only pick up a coin if it's heads up. He keeps figurines of elephants in his office, but only if their trunk is tilted up. Tilted down means your luck will run out. He'll only practice certain things at certain spots on the field. He buys two cups of coffee from the same shop in Wood-Ridge, N.J., on his way to Giants Stadium every morning. The year the Giants won the Super Bowl, the team practiced in Texas Stadium the day before the opening game. They lost the game. After that, he refused to practice at stadiums the day before away games and found other places to work out.

11. Jets. Defensive lineman Marty Lyons keeps seven sticks of Juicy Fruit gum in his locker for each game. He chews one stick before the game, one stick after. He leaves the other five alone. Linemate Mark Gastineau spends five minutes before each game combing his locks. Then he puts on his helmet. (Maybe Gastineau doesn't qualify as being superstitious. If you were engaged to Brigitte Nielsen, you'd want to look your best at all times, too.)

12. Seahawks. The Seattle players want to keep their identities hush-hush for fear that it will ruin their ritual, but for home games several players car pool to the Kingdome. They take the same car, sit in the same seats, take the same route, and play the same music.

—BOB SANSEVERE

WHY JIM FINKS IS THE NFL'S TOP EXECUTIVE

With the Minnesota Vikings, he drafted Bud Grant.

With the Chicago Bears, he drafted Walter Payton.

With the New Orleans Saints, he drafted Jim Mora.

Whenever coaches or players are concerned, you have to say Jim Finks, over the years, has done a pretty good job of picking.

It's one reason, but not the only one, that he has a track record stamping him as the premier front office executive in the NFL.

Finks plucked Grant out of the Canadian Football League, and the two of them laid the groundwork that vaulted the Vikings into four Super Bowls.

During a nine-year stay in Chicago, he created order out of chaos, eventually being responsible for 19 of the 22 Bears starters in Super Bowl XX.

In New Orleans, Finks inherited a 5-11 team, woed Jim Mora from the clutches of the Eagles, then watched as the Saints jumped to 7-9 and then to 12-3, the first winning season in the franchise's history.

Finks, a vibrant 60, is a pro's pro. "This is a business," he says of running an NFL team, "that brings out the best, and the worst, in people. The real test is how you handle adversity."

Conviction, some call it stubbornness, is a key asset for any executive. Bud Grant's arrival was not welcomed. But once Finks gave the head coach the tools, Grant carried the ball for one of the soundest franchises in the league. Eventually, Finks parted company in a show of stubbornness, after a dispute with the owner over authority and piece of the club.

In Chicago, Finks walked into a disorganized operation. Slowly, Finks gave the Bears a pro look, first with Jack Pardee, then, after Pardee left for the Redskins, with Neil Armstrong. Armstrong had a measure of success, but not enough to satisfy George Halas. Against Finks' wishes, Papa Bear insisted on bringing in Mike Ditka. A year later, Finks walked away.

Was he wrong about Ditka?

Finks will tell you he felt Armstrong would have succeeded, that Ditka won with Armstrong's defensive staff, one that included Buddy Ryan. Finks will tell you, while he admires Ditka, he could not endorse him as head coach.

When the Saints' post opened, Finks didn't leap. He pondered. "I would not have taken just any job to get back into the NFL," he explains. The Saints appealed to him for two reasons: Bum Phillips had assembled a nucleus of talent; and New Orleans proved, by backing a succession of losers, it was a choice site in a football-wild area.

That was Finks' recruiting pitch to Jim Mora. At the time, there were reports the Philadelphia job was Mora's. It made sense because the coach of the Philadelphia Stars lived only 35 minutes from Veterans Stadium. But Finks pointed out the obvious: The Saints were the only pro team in town, with a rabid following that had hungered 19 years for a winning season.

"Can I bring in all my assistants?" Mora asked.

"You can do what you feel you have to do," Finks told him.

Two seasons later, Mora was the NFL's coach of the year.

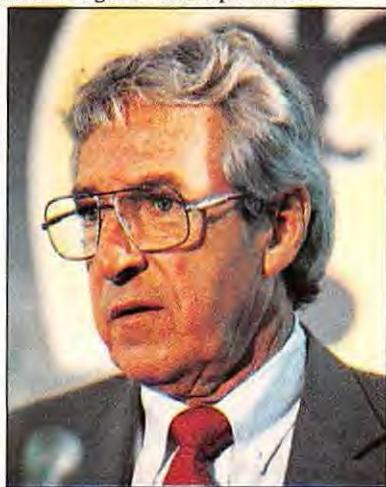
"The first time I interviewed with Jim Finks," says Mora, "I told myself he's the kind of guy I'd like to work for. He's someone who listened, who wanted input, who wanted you to take a stand. He handles people well."

In April's draft, Finks used a first-round pick to draft Pitt running back Craig (Ironhead) Heyward, who had off-field problems as well as a weight problem. Finks seemed to be going against what he had done in the past. Said Finks: "The stability of this organization would be a reflection of [Heyward's] approach to the game. He is a football player. We are a football team." He felt the Saints were stable and would not become unglued by a problem child.

Talent and direction, experience has told Finks, is the name of the game. "The key," he says, "is not making the spectacular deal but avoiding the spectacular blunder."

Holding his thumb and forefinger an inch apart, Jim Finks says: "That's the difference between winning and losing."

—PETER FINNEY



Finks: 'The key is avoiding the spectacular blunder.'

FOOTBALL RATINGS & Inside Stuff

Bowl. They've been back to the playoffs twice, but since their last postseason appearance in 1982, all they have done is lose.

They are very good at it. In non-strike games over the last five years the Bucs are 14-62. By contrast, six teams during that time have won 14 or more games in one season.

It isn't as if they haven't tried to be successful. They've made trades, spent money, hired and fired coaches, and gone through three directors of player personnel. They have held the No. 1 pick in the NFL draft four times. Owner Hugh Culverhouse, one of the most powerful voices in league matters, makes annual statements about his renewed commitment to excellence.

They play in a city that would turn itself over totally if the Bucs just weren't so gosh-awful bad. But if it can be done wrong, it's been done by the Bucs.

Example: In 1983 the Bucs let quarterback Doug Williams go to the USFL

WHY TAMPA BAY IS THE NFL'S WORST FRANCHISE

It is easy to forget that the Tampa Bay Buccaneers were good. Once.

Yes, it was a magic time, that autumn of '79. Picture the mighty Bucs trampling over 10 opponents, beating the Eagles in the playoffs, and almost making it to the Super

after a salary dispute. They have since spent an estimated \$10 million on five QBs in a desperate effort to replace the man who was last season's Super Bowl MVP. Vinny Testaverde, with a \$6 million price tag, is considered the answer, finally.

There's more. The Bucs engineered a disastrous stretch of drafting from 1983 to '85. Only three of the nine choices in the first three rounds of those years remain with the club.

First-round picks were traded for defensive linemen Booker Reese, a total bust, and QB Jack Thompson, who played two mediocre seasons and was mercifully waived. Only two first-round picks this decade are with the club.

One of their better picks during this time was guard Sean Farrell, but it was done by accident. Former coach John McKay wanted Reese, but the message was garbled and the Bucs took Farrell. So McKay shipped a first-round draft choice to Chicago and grabbed Reese.

Despite all of this, second-year coach Ray Perkins' public posture is that he has more to work with than he did when he began transforming the New York Giants into a Super Bowl champion. Privately, he is said to be distressed by what he was given to work with. But all he had to do was ask anyone who has seen the Bucs play and he'd have known what he was getting into.

—JOE HENDERSON

STEVE LARGENT VS. ALBERT LEWIS

Steve Largent, starting his 13th season, broke Harold Carmichael's record of catching a pass in 127 straight games in 1986 and has stretched his string to 152. He has caught more passes (752) than any player in the history of the game. Albert Lewis, starting his sixth season with the Chiefs, has been a starter the last four seasons. He has established himself as one of the top cornerbacks in the league and already has 21 interceptions in his career.

LARGENT: It's definitely a challenge when you're going up against a cornerback like Albert Lewis. He's got great speed and he's improved a lot since he first came into the league in 1983. He plays a lot of bump-and-run so the first thing I have to worry about is getting off the line of scrimmage. I have to utilize my quickness and never allow him to anticipate what I'm going to do when the ball is snapped.

Once I start running my route, I try to be as deceptive as possible and make him think I'm running one way when I really plan to go the other way. One technique is to use head fakes. Another is to run one particular route two or three times and then run a counter to that route. That can require some setup time. I try to feel out the defense to find out what particular game plan they've come into the game with.

But even if I can get open against Lewis, it doesn't mean I'm home free. The thing that impresses me the most about him is how quickly he can close the gap once the ball is in the air. There are times when I've thought I've been wide open and I'm just waiting to make the reception and he comes out of nowhere to make the play. It happens a lot on deep balls because he's so fast. He's also got good reach with his long arms and that helps him when he tries to knock the ball away.

One thing I have going for me is

that in my 12 years, we've basically had just two quarterbacks, Jim Zorn and Dave Krieg. Both guys worked a lot with me in practice, and I developed a rapport with them over the years. Even though I'm starting my 13th year, I always feel I can keep improving. You always want to get better. Your football skills diminish during the offseason and it takes time to get them back up again.

When I'm playing against Lewis, we don't do much talking on the field. I'm not too proud to tell him when he makes a good play, but I'm just concentrating on my assignment most of the time. Kansas City is a difficult team to throw against because they've got a lot of great athletes in the secondary besides Lewis, guys like Deron Cherry, Lloyd Burruss, and Kevin Ross. You know you're not going to get any easy ones against those guys, but that's what makes it such a challenge.

LEWIS: There's nobody better than Steve Largent at running the intermediate routes. The first time I had to cover him I was nervous. I was just a rookie playing as a nickel back. But when I shut down a pattern, I started to gain confidence in my ability. The funny thing about it is that he was easier to cover when I was a rookie because he didn't know me, but I knew him.

It's a lot of fun to play against him because he forces you to prepare. You have to study a lot of film to figure out why he's doing what he's doing. When you do that, you get good work habits. I look forward to playing against him, but I get a few more butterflies than I do when I'm getting ready to go against other players. We have mutual respect for one another.

You can't do the same thing every down against him. You've got to keep him guessing. He's very elusive and you can't take chances on your jam. If you reach out and miss him, he's gone. You have to make that decision in a split second whether to try to jam him. The worst thing you can do when you jam a guy is to push him into his pattern. If he wants to run inside, you don't want to push him inside. He's got good body control because he's shorter than I am. [Largent is 5'11" and Lewis is 6'2".] It's harder for tall guys, but the advantage is that I have a long reach. The game is a matter of inches and just that little added reach has helped me tremendously.

Life on the corner is not an easy life. You have to be a different kind of person to handle it. You can't let your highs get too high or your lows too low. I don't feel bad when a guy like Steve catches a pass on me. He was the first guy to score a touchdown on me. I remember he had a tendency to give me the same move on one route and I thought he was never going to get open against me on that route. But then he gave me that move and broke it back out and he scored. Afterward, he said I was biting on the move. I learned from that.

It would really be a kick to shut him out and end his streak. He's awfully tough to shut out, but if it were ended, I'd like to be the one to do it. I don't cover him every play anyway, and I'm not sure I could do it, but I'd like the opportunity to try. He's a measuring stick for any defensive back. He makes you get better and that's why I always enjoy playing against him.

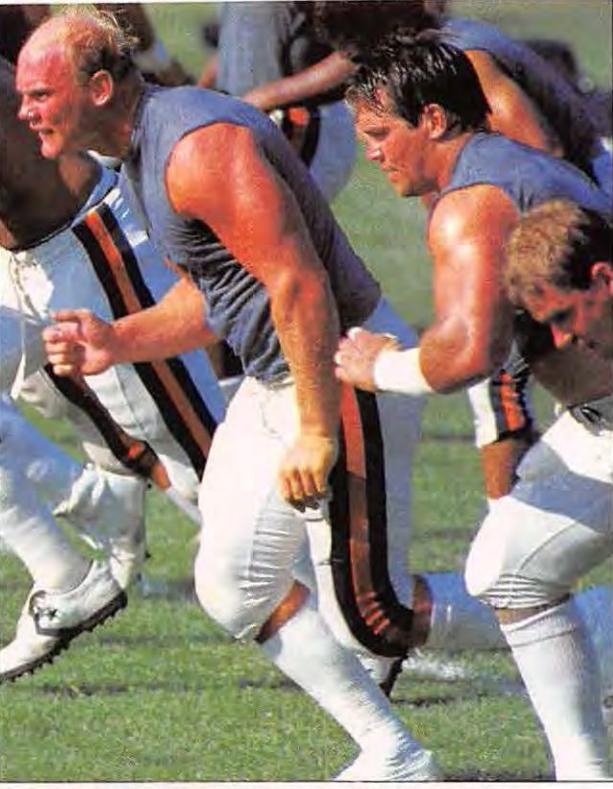
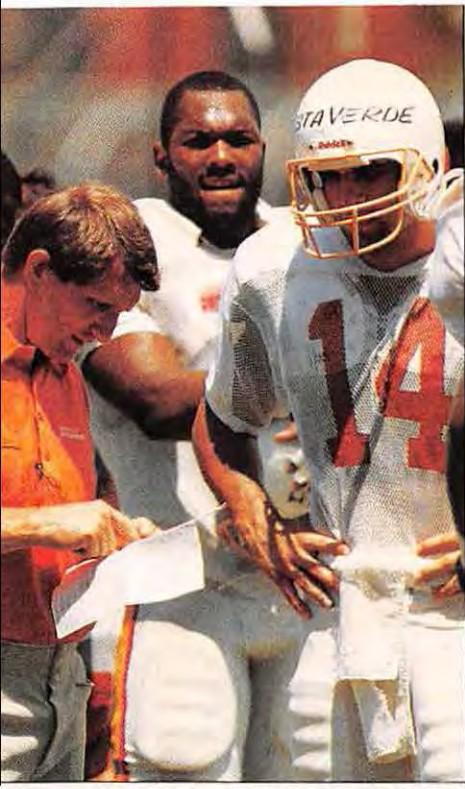
—As told to VITO STELLINO



Largent excels at running short and intermediate pass routes.



Once the pass is airborne, Lewis makes up ground quickly.



Testaverde earns his money in the Florida heat, and the Bears fight to earn Ditka's respect.

FIVE TOUGHEST TRAINING CAMPS

1. Buccaneers. Ray Perkins was known to have his team on the field three or four times a day last year, though he promises this year's camp will be less severe.

2. Raiders. The theory around the league is to get the Raiders early in the schedule because they beat each other up so badly during the training camp.

3. Bears. One opposing coach says that if a player doesn't hate head coach Mike Ditka already, Ditka will find a way to make him hate him during the preseason.

4. Dolphins. Don Shula's work ethic is unquestioned, and the heat and humidity make for a long, tough camp.

5. Saints. Already, Jim Mora's newly installed discipline shows. This year, though, the Saints get a break from the bayou when they move their camp to Wisconsin.

—B. K.

THE DO'S & DON'TS OF TRAINING CAMP

Every social situation carries its own unique etiquette, its own unwritten rules of order. For example, a proper gentleman can always distinguish the salad fork from the dinner fork.

NFL training camps are no different, though the use of utensils is not a high priority. Here, then, is our version of *Emily Post Goes To Training Camp*.

□ When it's time to hit the training table, make sure to get in line before the defensive linemen. Otherwise, you take the risk of being left with some stray green beans, a hunk of cheese, and some souring skim milk.

□ Never make fun of any teammate named after an appliance.

□ If you're a coach and you have a player named after an appliance, put all fast-food joints on red alert. "Do not serve this man," you should tell them. "He is distinguishable by his great girth and answers to the name Trash Compactor."

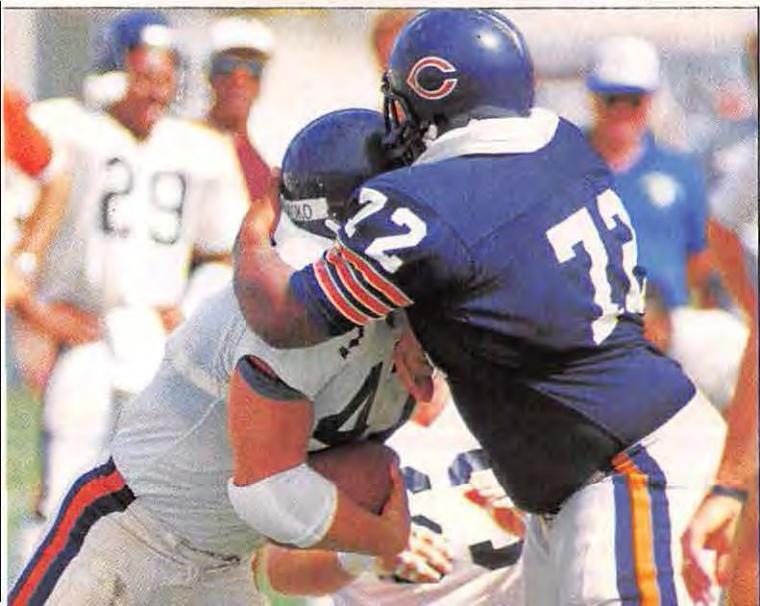
□ Remember, depth charts are not necessarily in alphabetical order. So if your last name is Zanone and you're eighth on the team's chart at tight end, you're in grave danger of not making the team.

□ Never tell the team's union representative that you broke into the NFL as a replacement player.

□ If you're a rookie drafted in the third round or later, don't put a down payment on a condominium.

—BOB KRAVITZ

Even teammates are wary of Perry, the NFL's toughest appliance.



FOOTBALL'S TOUGHEST TRAINING CAMP

Tampa Bay Buccaneers head coach Ray Perkins read the stories, saw the headlines. His training camp last season, his first as coach of the woeful Bucs, was being characterized as everything from "Stalag Perkins" to boot camp to reform school. After all, he was running three-a-day practices, sometimes four, leaving you with the impression he was torturing his young athletes for fun and profit.

Not true.

"People heard 'three-a-days' and it got all blown out of proportion," Perkins said. "Heck, our first practice each day was in shorts and we were only doing special teams work."

But this is not to say that Perkins didn't run the toughest camp in the NFL. He did. But there was a method to the madness.

"The reason we put in so much time was because we had a new staff, new players, and so much to teach," Perkins said. "This simply gave us more teaching time."

Beyond that, it helped build a foundation for a franchise that has floundered much of its young life. Perkins not only vowed to change the system, but the team's attitude as well.

"A lot of good things came out of last year's camp that don't show in the won-lost column," Perkins said. "It gave them a sense of the way we want to do things. And they reacted very well. . . . It's human nature. The harder you work for something, the more time and energy you put into it, the harder you're going to fight for it."

"We felt we needed to find an edge somewhere going into last season, and we found that edge by being in a little better shape, by being a little higher emotionally. Unfortunately, a lot of that was wiped out by the strike."

Perkins' philosophy with the Bucs is no different than his approach when he took over the New York Giants, another franchise mired in mediocrity, in 1979. He worked that team hard and long, and within three years had them bound for the playoffs.

"With a young, building team, it's important that you get them as many workouts as possible," said Perkins, who had his share of workouts while playing for Bear Bryant [Alabama] and Don Shula [Baltimore Colts]. "But your approach changes as your personnel changes. My first few years with the Giants, the camps were tougher. But by that third year, it was fairly easy, because I felt we needed to come out of camp completely healthy."

To that end, Perkins promises this year's Bucs camp will be slightly less severe.

"We'll stay with two-a-days," he said. "Plus, we'll do a little less hitting than we did last year. But it will still be tough. Heck, it's supposed to be tough."

—B. K.

'SEE THE COACH, AND BRING YOUR PLAYBOOK'

The fear of being cut is not new for pro football players. Unlike baseball, in which being cut generally means dropping one level in the organization, being cut from an NFL team generally is the first step toward the end of a career.

NFL Hall-of-Famer Art Donovan remembers a time in his rookie season with the Baltimore Colts in 1950 when the dreaded words "See the coach and bring your playbook" created a near panic.

"We had a coach named Clem Crowe who was an absolute wild man," Donovan said.

"One summer we had played an exhibition game against the Packers in Green Bay and we were landing at the airport in Baltimore. Crowe got off the plane and was standing at the bottom as we got off."

"As each player passed, he looked at him and said, 'You stay,' or 'you're gone.' Well, he did this with a few guys and then it kind of spread to the other guys what was happening."

"There were about 10 guys in the back of the plane who were marginal players. They were so worried about getting cut, they refused to get off the plane."

Cuts are more humane these days, if that is possible, although coaches admit it's the toughest part of their job.

"It's the one aspect of my job that I don't like," said Tampa Bay coach Ray Perkins. "It's very difficult to tell a player that he can't play anymore."

Patriots coach Raymond Berry, a 20th-round draft choice who worked his way into the Hall of Fame, says it is sometimes better to tell a player quickly, rather than let him linger.

"If a player can't really play, you want to tell him so he can get on with his life," Berry said.

Still, some players take the news with varying degrees of composure. "There was a time when Don Klosterman was in Houston that a guy he cut came after him with a gun," says New York Giants general manager George Young.

Young recalled another player being cut and responding by stealing towels and linens from the hotel across the street from the team's training camp.

"Let me say that the hotel was not a Hilton," said Young, who made up the cost of the missing towels by deducting \$28 from the player's final paycheck.

New York Giants director of media services Ed Croke recalls two incidents that are in his Hall of Fame.

"We had a guy in 1974 named George Hasenohrl," said Croke. "He was a tackle from Ohio State. It was our first year training at Pace College and Hasenohrl had put on about 40 pounds and wasn't doing that well during the early drills."

"Finally, the coaches decided he couldn't do it anymore and cut him."

"Hasenohrl was very calm at first, gathering his things. But then he called his wife on the pay phone in the hallway and tried to explain what had happened. As he talked Hasenohrl got madder and madder and finally ended the conversation by ripping the phone out of the wall."

Croke's favorite story is about a player named Joe Whalen, a free agent the Giants brought to camp one summer when Allie Sherman was the Giants coach. Whalen lasted about a week and then was cut. But in the early days of training camp, no one noticed who came and who left.

Whalen stayed and stayed, sleeping in the dorms, eating in the cafeteria, and watching practice from the stands.

Finally, Sherman noticed his former player. "Who's that guy?" said Sherman, watching Whalen eat lunch. An assistant coach looked over and saw Whalen. "Hey, you cut him two weeks ago," said the coach.

Whalen was quickly approached for an explanation. "I didn't have any money to go anywhere. And the meals were good and I had a bed, so I decided to stay," he said.

New England Patriots general manager Pat Sullivan, who grew up as a ball boy in training camp, remembers one incident when he did the cutting.

"We had this one guy," said Sullivan. "He loved to look at himself in the mirror. He loved to show off his body."

"Well, this guy always slept naked and one day I was told to get him and tell him that the coaches wanted to see him and he had to bring his key and his playbook. In those days there were six guys in the room. I had to tell him he was cut. I was about 14."

"I told him, 'coach [Mike] Holovak wants to see you.' Everybody was sleeping. He reached over grabbed a fan and threw it at me. The guy was stark naked and he started chasing me. He chased me right outside before he realized that he didn't have any clothes on."

—MARK BLAUDSCHUN

FIVE EASIEST TRAINING CAMPS

1. Patriots. When it comes to training camp, Ray Berry is the ultimate players' coach. His motto is, "Don't overdo it."

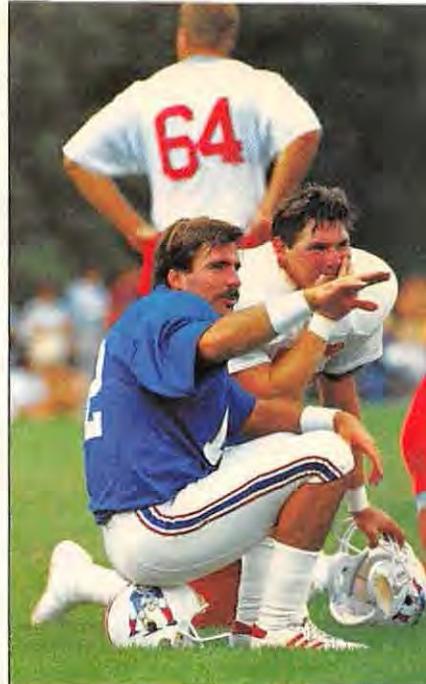
2. Vikings. It's not as laid back as it was in the Bud Grant days, but head coach Jerry Burns is no taskmaster either.

3. 49ers. Bill Walsh's team doesn't do a lot of physical work, but it spends endless hours listening to the coaches yap.

4. Bengals. This team comes in late and, for economic reasons, Sam Wyche brings in very few people. It makes for a less physical training camp.

5. Lions. One opposing coach made this remark: "A tough camp wouldn't give [head coach] Darryl Rogers enough time to play golf." Enough said.

—B. K.



Tom Ramsey and Craig James
are happy summer campers.

FOOTBALL'S EASIEST TRAINING CAMP

When Raymond Berry was terrorizing defensive backs during his days as a collegiate and pro wide receiver, he came to a strongly felt conclusion:

He was overworked.

"Two people, Bob Shaw [the Baltimore Colts receivers coach] and my dad [a former high school coach] kept telling me over and over again that I was overtraining," says Berry, now the head coach of the New England Patriots. "I didn't realize for many years that I was playing tired all the time. When I finally accepted what they were saying and learned to let up, the results were very dramatic."

Berry's experience as a player clearly transfers to his philosophy as head coach. His motto is: "Keep the tray full," meaning that he'd rather have his players walking around without the aid of crutches come game day.

"I've always preferred the cautious route when it comes to injuries," Berry says. "I'd rather underwork a player than have him get hurt. . . . The worst thing you can do with an athlete is overwork him."

The Patriots training camp is characterized by very little full contact. And players are encouraged to inform the training staff if they feel any pain or twinge.

"If a guy says he feels tight or sore, then we evaluate him and generally tell him to shut it down," says Patriots trainer Ron O'Neil. "We feel that if a player misses one or two practices, or even a whole week, what is that compared to six or eight weeks?"

The communication between players and the training staff is heavily stressed. "That's one of our clear-cut policies," Berry says. "A player must alert us about warning signs of injuries. It's irresponsible if a player fails to alert us when he's hurting."

But the question is: If camp has so few physical demands, will players adhere to their offseason training programs? Will they be in proper shape for the season?

Berry says yes. "Our experience has been that our players have reported at excellent levels of conditioning," he says. "So once a player gets to that high level, you have to be careful how much work you put on him."

It's interesting to note that Tampa Bay coach Ray Perkins and Berry used to compare notes regarding training camps when Perkins was a rookie and Berry a veteran in 1967 with the Baltimore Colts.

"It was something we spent a lot of time talking about," Berry says. "He [Perkins] learned a lot of good policies from [late Alabama coach] Bear Bryant [for whom Perkins played]. Everybody has different influences and different ideas."

Says Perkins of Berry: "You've got to remember that he has a veteran team in New England and that has an effect on his approach to training camp."

It's an approach that is novel, to say the least. Certainly, it's an approach that is appreciated by the Patriots' players.

—B. K.

FOOTBALL RATINGS & Inside Stuff

his forte, is mental. He is perhaps the smartest guy in the NFL. He is in contrast, say, to our guy, John Elway. By that I mean John is a great athletic talent; he can do whatever he wants to do with his body, athletically.

But Bernie reads defenses so quickly and so accurately, he can make you look foolish no matter how good you are. He throws the ball very accurately,

always to the right area, the right guy, and at the right time. He may not have the best arm in the league, and he may not be the quickest quarterback on his feet, but he always knows the right thing to do. Most of the time that kind of quarterback is more difficult to prepare for because you know you aren't going to be able to fool him. You have to play an even better game, a smarter game.

In the second half of each of our last two meetings he was just unbelievable. Two years ago John had to put together that 98-yard march in the last two minutes to win, and last year the Browns were going in again in the final minutes before a fumble ended their drive.

You don't worry about Kosar as a scrambler, but you can't ignore him as a runner, either. He won't beat you

Mecklenburg's presence forces offenses to alter game plans.

running, the way our guy [Elway] can, but when the receivers are covered he has a way of picking up some important yardage. He's so tall [6'5"] he eats up more ground than you think.

The fact that he's such a different kind of quarterback isn't a big deal, but the fact that he's such a smart quarterback makes our job a lot tougher. You can't blitz him because he sees the defense and knows what you're doing. The Cleveland system helps him read defenses better than most.

The big thing when you're playing against Bernie is that you can't afford to relax, not for a minute. He's still very young, too, so he's going to get better. He's a Dan Fouts-type guy, the kind who will do whatever it takes to beat you. He can only get better, and because he depends so much on his intelligence, that won't change his style or his effectiveness as he gets older.

—DAVE KLEIN

KARL MECKLENBURG VS. BERNIE KOSAR

Karl Mecklenburg is one of the AFC's top outside linebackers; Bernie Kosar is one of the conference's leading quarterbacks. This pair has faced off in the last two AFC Championship Games, and each time Denver has come away with a narrow victory. Their regular-season meeting last year was canceled by the strike, but the schedule-makers have set up another regular-season showdown this year. It may be a preview of another AFC Championship Game.

MECKLENBURG Bernie Kosar is a great quarterback, and not for the same reasons that others are called great. His main strength,

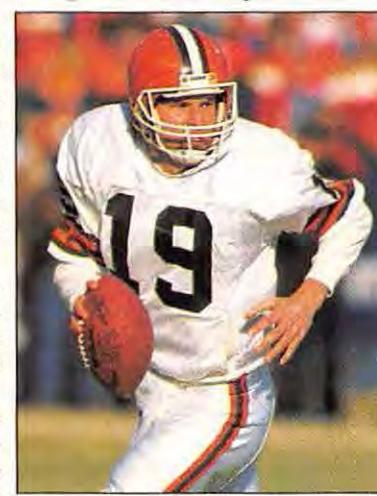
KOSAR I'm not going to be very specific about Karl Mecklenburg because in all honesty I don't categorize individual players that much. I know how good a defense is, where I have to try to attack it, how I can try to move the ball, and what plays have a chance of working.

Of course, I understand the risks playing against a defense that has Karl as one of its linebackers, because he is very difficult for me to handle. He's a smart, quick, strong linebacker who has a great deal of experience and that only makes him tougher to handle.

Our offensive approach is to take advantage of whatever the particular defense is giving up. Every defense, no matter how good, has to surrender something in order to guard against something else. That's how defenses operate. My job, and the job of our coaching staff, is to find out what they're giving away in order to take away what we want to do. That's how the game is played, and that's how games are won and lost.

Despite the contact and the hitting, football is really a thinking game, a chess match, and the Broncos are one of the few teams I've played to have so many moves it's hard to follow.

I'm not blaming that great defense for beating us in the last two championship games, because there are things we could have done better. I know I have made mistakes in the two championship games and if I hadn't, maybe the Browns would have been in the last two Super Bowls instead of Denver.



Kosar can't ignore exceptional players like Mecklenburg.

Mecklenburg is one of the most dangerous linebackers in the game today because he can be just as effective against the run, against the pass, and as a pass-rusher. He's big, strong, and much quicker than you'd think for a guy his size, and he uses his intelligence beautifully. As I said before, we don't decide to use a play, or not use another play, because of an individual player, but having to deal with people like Mecklenburg does play a part in what we decide to do.

I'd like to repeat that I look at football as an intellectual game. There is always something possible, a give and take, an action and reaction. But playing against the Bronco defense gives me lots of time to appreciate just how well a defensive concept can be structured.

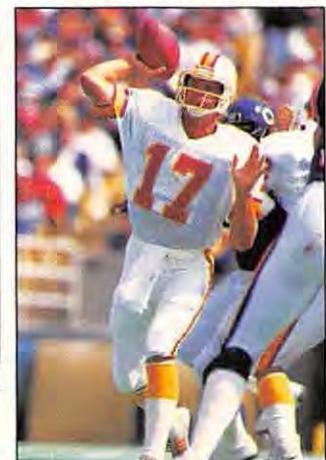
THE WORST ATHLETES EVERYBODY WANTS

1. Steve DeBerg, Chiefs. Though not a great quarterback, at least not in the sense of a Montana or Elway, DeBerg has managed to build a career on guile and intelligence. Now playing for his fourth team, every year he seems to be the target of teams in need of a stopgap quarterback.

2. Joe Klecko, Colts. Even though he was brought into several camps and failed at least four physicals since the end of last season, he managed to create a bidding war among the Colts, Patriots, and Broncos, with each team apparently willing to hand out base salaries of least \$250,000 plus considerable incentives even though he missed

eight games for the Jets last year because of a knee injury. This once-

Deberg's lack of star quality hasn't kept teams from calling.



fearsome defensive lineman registered only one sack in all of 1987.

3. Marc Wilson, Raiders. When it became clear the San Diego Chargers would have to enter the 1988 season without Dan Fouts, they considered Wilson as a possible replacement. They apparently never wondered about the reasons behind the Raiders' own quarterback problems. The Raiders themselves were quick to establish their hold on this mediocre commodity by signing Wilson to a \$900,000 per year contract. Wilson's numbers last year weren't bad (57.1 completion percentage, 12 TDs, eight interceptions), but his inability to lead is notorious.

—M. B.

TEN THINGS BRIAN BOSWORTH WOULD BE WITHOUT FOOTBALL:

10. Freddie Young's caddie.
9. Almost \$10 million poorer.
8. President of the Sean Penn fan club.
7. A tackling dummy at the University of Oklahoma.
6. Jim McMahon's agent.
5. Wrestling tag-team partner of Randy (Macho Man) Savage.
4. Commissioner of the Arena Football League.
3. A regular on David Letterman's *Five Stupid Pet Tricks*.
2. Earring model for Cartier Jewelers.
1. Only his hairdresser knows for sure.

—P. L.

FOOTBALL RATINGS & Inside Stuff

2. The Lodge, Chicago. It's not one of the city's trendier places. But the atmosphere can't be beat, the juke box is always blaring, and the crowd can be amusing, especially after a Bears victory when some guy wearing a Bears head might pop in to celebrate.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE A TICKET, HERE'S WHERE YOU SHOULD BE

Here are the five best places to be if you don't have a ticket for an NFL game.

1. Fuzzy's, Kansas City. The food is fine and you have half a dozen TV sets to watch your favorite sporting event, including the Chiefs game.

2. Runyon's, New York. Still the ultimate sports hangout for the fashionable East Side crowd. But there's no telling who you might find as your barmate. Could be a former Giant or Jet, could be a current one, or it could be some of Gotham's literary hotshots.

3. Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Go down to your favorite bakery, buy a loaf of fresh bread. Add a little wine, cheese, and a blanket and head for one of the great city parks in America. If the weather's nice, and chances are it will be through October at least, you enjoy a balmy sunny day. If you must, bring your radio and root for the Niners long distance.

4. The Border Cafe, Cambridge, Mass. Head to Harvard Square and watch another game—a cross section of people that you won't find

anywhere else this side of Berkeley. There are book stores and the famous out-of-town newsstand to catch up on your reading. Then head to the Border Cafe, which has pretty decent Mexican food. And you might even see a celebrity such as Bill Walton, who has been known to drop in for a few Margaritas. After a day like that, the Pats are an afterthought. —M.B.

5. Neal Anderson, Bears (replacing Walter Payton). Legends aren't replaced, they become yardsticks against whom others are measured.

6. Mark Malone, Chargers (replacing Dan Fouts). The poor guy can't catch a break. First, he tried to

tirement, trades, waivers, and, believe it or not, free agency, several notable jerseys will be hung up this season. And these players will be stepping out of the shadows:

7. Gerald Nichols, Jets (replacing Joe Klecko). Nichols, a seventh-round pick a year ago, made the team because Jets linemen Klecko, Mark Gastineau, and Marty Lyons all suffered injuries. Klecko returned at midseason after reconstructive surgery, but wasn't effective. He failed the Jets' postseason physical and was let go. He later signed with the Colts. If Klecko plays well—and he'll get two chances a year against the Jets—Jets coach Joe Walton will be asked a lot of questions.

8. Ron Rivera, Bears (replacing Wilber Marshall). Once Marshall signed the \$6 million offer sheet from the Redskins, the starting job became Rivera's.

A No. 2 pick in 1984, Rivera played frequently as a versatile back-up until he got the opportunity to start when Otis Wilson was injured. It should make for an easy transition, but, remember, Wilson is no Marshall. —JOHN DELCOS

9. John Elway, Broncos. All that Elway has to do is win a Super Bowl. He's already been proclaimed the best quarterback in football. By the 1990s, Elway will be the sage veteran, a Dan Fouts if you will, throwing the ball with both skill and experience.

10. Neal Anderson, Bears. His success depends on the Bears. If the Monsters of the Midway can maintain a playoff status, Anderson could become the Bears' Walter Payton of the 1990s. But even if the

team falters, chances are that the former University of Florida running back will get his yardage, game after game, year after year. If the Bears stumble, Anderson might become the Ernie Banks of the 1990s. But either way, he's going to be a factor.

11. Bernie Kosar, Browns. A veteran who's not even 25. Give him a year or two of experience and he will become an All-Pro. Bernie hardly looks like a graceful quarterback when you watch him run or even throw. But the ball gets there and it's going to continue doing that for some time. —M.B.

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PLAYERS WITH HUGE SHOES TO FILL

A legend's shoes are always a size too large. Making it in the NFL is a tight fit; trying to replace a star guarantees blisters. Through re-

tirement, trades, waivers, and, believe it or not, free agency, several notable jerseys will be hung up this season. And these players will be stepping out of the shadows:

1. Neal Anderson, Bears (replacing Walter Payton). Legends aren't replaced, they become yardsticks against whom others are measured.

From a historical perspective, Anderson won't touch Payton this season or any other season. However, in terms of performance, Anderson's role has expanded since the Bears selected him in the first round of the 1986 draft. Last season he was the Bears' top rusher and their top receiver. With quarterback Jim McMahon's health a major concern, there's added reason for Anderson to produce.

2. Mark Malone, Chargers (replacing Dan Fouts). The poor guy can't catch a break. First, he tried to

Anderson will try on the glass slipper last worn by Payton.

replace Terry Bradshaw—he of the four Super Bowl rings—in Pittsburgh; now it is Fouts. Both are future Hall-of-Famers. And Malone's legacy? The Tom Selleck look-alike will be remembered for catching the longest touchdown pass (90 yards) in Steelers history.

Charger fans hope the sun will revitalize Malone, who completed just 46.4% of his passes in '87 with six TDs and 19 interceptions. Malone knows it could be a setting sun.

3. Johnny Rembert, Patriots (replacing Steve Nelson). Nelson, the Pats' all-time leading tackler, will be missed not only for his performance at inside linebacker, but for his steady influence. He played 14 seasons and went to three Pro Bowls. His role was to stay home and protect the run, which let OLB Andre Tippett free-lance.

Rembert started for Nelson when the latter was injured the last two seasons. That experience should help the transition.

FIVE PLAYERS WHO'LL DOMINATE THE 1990S

1. Bo Jackson, Raiders. Bo is a two-sport guy now. But how long can he keep it up? Sooner or later, he's going to have to make a choice, even if he's forced to make it by the Raiders or the Kansas City Royals. Although baseball might be better for Bo in the long term, he clearly can be the dominant runner in the game if he sticks to football. And with a few incentives from the Raiders, Bo could learn to like being a one-sport guy again.

2. Vinny Testaverde, Buccaneers. Can the Bucs win with Testaverde? Yes, they can. Will they? Just watch. With Ray Perkins committed to building a winner, Tampa Bay could be a strong team in the next decade with Testaverde leading the way. Although he might need another year or two of seasoning, by 1990 Testaverde will be a four-year pro and ready to make his move up the ladder of top RBs.

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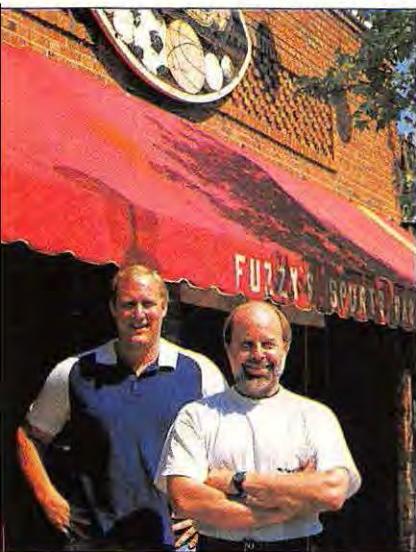
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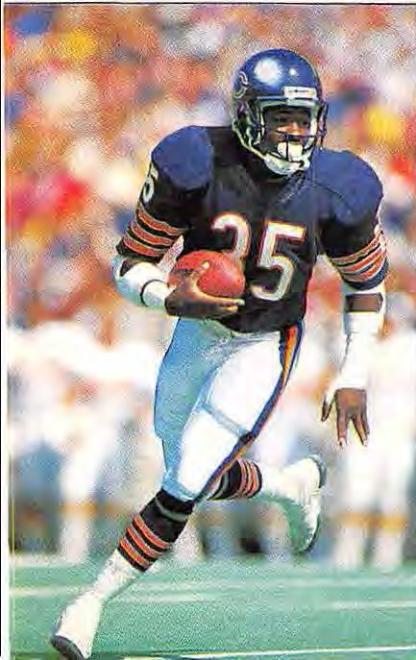
—JOHN DELCOS



Jackson will soon toss his bat aside in favor of the pumpkin.



Kenny Kremer and Ron Schonover co-own Fuzzy's in Kansas City.



INSIDE SPORTS

WHY WILBER MARSHALL'S DEFECTION WILL HURT THE BEARS

1. Loss of talent. Talent wins games. The Bears' defense, already on a two-year slide, can't possibly be better without its best athlete. Not only did it lose a two-time Pro Bowler, but one who plays at a position that has the most important role in today's defensive scheme.

Chicago is relatively deep at linebacker with Ron Rivera, Mike Singletary, and Otis Wilson. Yet, as former NFL coach Dick Vermeil points out, "Few teams have two guys of [Marshall's] caliber who can make the same play. There's no way it can help not to have him on your side of the line."

Another damaging side effect is that because of Marshall's defection, there will be no competition to light a fire under the enigmatic Wilson.

2. Strengthens a conference rival. The Bears' loss wouldn't be nearly as bad if Marshall had bolted for the AFC, or even a weaker NFC rival. But now the team that knocked Chicago out of the playoffs for two years running has

firmed up one of its few soft spots on defense—outside linebacker.

Of course, the Bears could draft someone of Marshall's caliber with the two first-round draft choices they received as compensation. But that's not likely to happen. Washington's No. 1 pick this season was 27th overall, the next year's is likely to be, at best, in the low 20s. Of the eight players drafted 27th this decade, only Dan Marino has appeared in more than one Pro Bowl.

3. Psychological effect. What does it say when somebody bullies the Bears? It says that they're not so big and bad anymore. More important, it suggests that while teams such as Washington have made a serious commitment to winning, the Bears have more pressing matters.

Management argued that Marshall's guaranteed, \$6 million deal would have upset its salary structure and triggered a morale problem. It remains to be seen whether another early playoff exit will have the same result. —P.L.

THE CHANGING FACES OF NFL OWNERS

It is a Sunday evening in January 1987. The New York Giants have just crushed the Denver Broncos 39-20 to win the Super Bowl.

Standing on the podium in the Giants locker room is Wellington T. Mara, the patriarch of a family that has been in the pro football business for more than 60 years.

Mara is smiling. After all these years, after the failure and tragedies of the past, the Mara family has reached the summit. In this, the most private of moments in the most public of places, what is Wellington Mara thinking?

"I was thinking about how much I enjoyed it all," said Mara. "How much I felt like I was part of the staff and players that had put all of this together."

A year later another Super Bowl week arrived. The Denver Broncos are staying at a hotel in the posh San Diego suburb of La Jolla. A week of parties is just starting with black tie the dress code of the evening.

But 43-year-old Pat Bowlen wants nothing to do with the hoopla.

Like it or not, Bowlen, by virtue of owning the Broncos, is a celebrity. But a reluctant one. And now Bowlen wants to get away from the crowds. So he takes his 10-speed bike and begins a 40-mile ride

Old-line families with old money that ran football teams like a mom-and-pop business.

But in 1960 that started to change. The emergence of the American Football League opened up vistas that hadn't been seen. There were new owners, new franchises, new money, and changes in commitment. And those changes have continued as new problems—such as strikes and the influence of drug and alcohol abuse—have crept into the league.

Cleveland Browns owner Art Modell, angered by last year's strike and saddened by the death of one of his players (Don Rogers) in a drug-related incident, talked about leaving the business. It wasn't fun anymore, he said.

"There is now a new breed of cat as owners," said Mara. "I don't say that in a disparaging way. There are owners now who have made their fortunes in other businesses. They're coming into [the NFL] for varying reasons."

And come they have. People like San Francisco 49ers owner Eddie DeBartolo Jr., whose family fortune came in real estate, New Orleans' Tom Benson (real estate), Dallas' Bum Bright (oil), San Diego's Alex Spanos (construction), and last spring, New England's Paul Fireman, who made his fortune by turning Reebok International into the fastest growing company in America.

Some were almost absentee owners, content to hire others to run their organizations and watch merely as a fan. Others, such as Indianapolis Colts owner Bob Irsay, want to be involved in calling plays or deciding who plays.

Yet, there is a desire to win, to be the best. In that vein, Bowlen will do anything to help his team win. "Pat Bowlen is a superb owner," said Broncos coach Dan Reeves. "He will do everything in his power to give us a chance to win."

Being a winner is what draws them, despite knowledge that owning an NFL team will not produce a fortune.

When asked why he would risk part of his \$400 million fortune on a financially unstable football team, the 44-year old Fireman grinned.

"I have a commitment to this area," he said. "I grew up here. I want to see the Patriots stay in New England. And besides, it [owning the team] is fun."

So as another season begins, the urge to be standing in that winning locker room on Super Bowl Sunday is still strong.

"When it comes to that," said Mara, laughing, "the owners haven't changed much. There is still an urgency to see their team win."

And when that happens, the business becomes a game again. —M.B.



Wellington Mara: 'There is a new breed of cat as owners.'

through the hills of Southern California.

Bowlen is a millionaire. But his money has been in oil and real estate, not football. And while the Broncos are a passion, they do not consume him.

He has other interests. He likes a lifestyle that takes him many places beyond a locker room. He is far different from Wellington Mara, whose life has revolved around a team that has always been the family business.

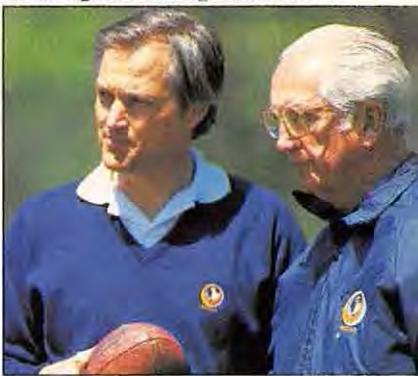
The contrast is evident. Mara is of the old guard, Bowlen of the new. A slow transition is taking place.

What changes will this transition bring? A more bottom-line mentality for one. The new breed of owners is as apt to look at a balance sheet as a win-loss record.

Already there have been signs of a change in the philosophy: The NFL broke away from the network stranglehold on telecasts by allowing ESPN to pick up preseason games and regular-season Sunday night games.

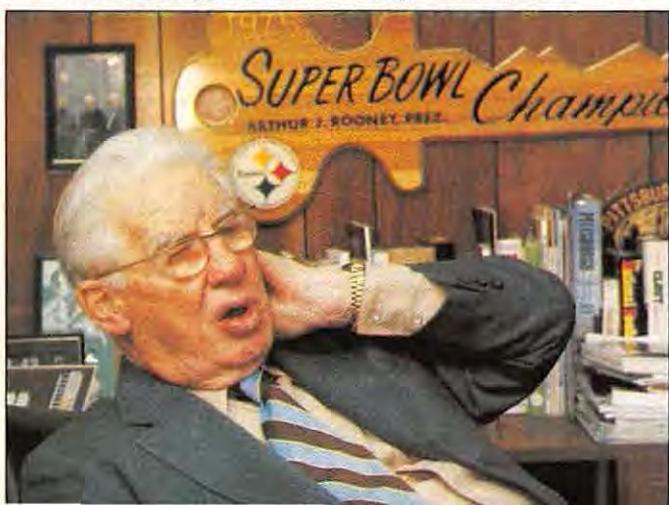
There could also be changes in marketing. Do not be surprised if corporate sponsors suddenly become partners in NFL franchises as the new breed of owners look for ways to find additional revenue.

Owning a football team used to be a family affair. The Maras in New York, the Rooneys in Pittsburgh, the Halases/McCaskeys in Chicago.



Michael and Edward McCaskey carry on George Halas' legacy.

Pittsburgh's Rooney personifies the old guard among NFL owners.



FOOTBALL RATINGS & Inside Stuff

team; he'd do very well in any business area.

He has an unexcelled ability to bring a team back from a bad loss, or even a series of losses, so you know that you can't relax for a moment when you're facing a John Robinson team. In 1984, for instance, we beat the Rams 33-0, and the Los Angeles press treated it like the end of the world. They were asking John, 'How are you ever going to come back from this?' But by the end of the season, the Rams were in the playoffs.

Last year is perhaps an even better example. The Rams got off to a terrible start with all that fuss about Eric Dickerson, but John somehow got everything sorted out, and they almost made the playoffs again.

You know his team is going to be very solid fundamentally. You can't prepare a game plan to attack a specific weakness, because there won't be one. When they're healthy, they're solid at every position.

That means that you have to prepare yourself in a very fundamental way and execute perfectly.

They don't try a lot of fancy defenses or blitzing, so in that sense, John's teams are predictable. But even that can be deceiving because, just when you think you've got them figured out, they'll do something unexpected. That happened to us in a game in 1986, when Joe Montana was hurt and Jeff Kemp was playing quarterback against us. I'm convinced that we could have won the game except that the Rams blitzed Kemp on a key down late in the game and disrupted our rhythm.

John's teams are always going to be very physical, too. He figures that if he can stay even with you for three quarters, his team will wear you down and beat you in the fourth quarter, just because of their strength.

That puts a lot of pressure on me to get something going early, so we have a lead going into the fourth quarter. Sometimes that's caused me to jump ahead in my play-calling, to use a play early that I should hold back on until the fourth quarter, just in the hopes of getting something going.

Going back to his days at USC, John has always believed in a run-oriented offense. He won't panic if he gets behind and try to get big plays right away. He'll just keep running the ball.

COACHES WHO SHOULD BE FIRED—BUT WON'T

1. Al Saunders, Chargers. When San Diego was 8-1 last season, Saunders was the NFL's golden boy, a candidate for coach of the year. Then the Chargers faded and failed to make the playoffs. This year, Saunders has lost some of his luster. A poor start could put him in jeopardy. And a poor finish could finish him off. But barring a total collapse, Saunders will last another year with what everyone concedes is just an average team.

2. Darryl Rogers, Lions. Detroit was a bad team a year ago. They should be out of the playoffs again



Walsh and Robinson form a California mutual admiration society.

BILL WALSH VS. JOHN ROBINSON

San Francisco 49ers coach Bill Walsh and Los Angeles Rams coach John Robinson have coached against each other in college (Robinson at USC, Walsh at Stanford) and in the pros for the last five years. They have great mutual respect and affection. "He's a real gentleman," Walsh says of Robinson. Says Robinson: "We're friends, and we often get together when we're in the same town."

This is what they had to say about each other as coaches:

WALSH: John has probably more executive ability than is actually needed for coaching a football

ROBINSON: There are two things that make it so tough to coach against Bill. One is that he's able to figure out exactly what it takes to beat you. If you've got any weaknesses at all, he'll find them. He isolates on those weaknesses and figures out how to take advantage of them. I've never seen anybody quite as good as Bill at doing that.

Bill also has such a wide base of plays to draw from that it's hard to defend him. Different teams have different personalities. The Oakland Raiders of the mid-'70s, with Kenny Stabler and that group, used to come at you with the same type of thing every week. You knew what was coming, but you still couldn't stop it.

Bill's teams are just the opposite. They're finesse teams. You never know quite what to expect.

We'll get film of the last three games they've played, but Bill is famous for not using much, if anything, in a game that shows on those three films. But anybody can do that. There's nothing to stop a coach from using the Wishbone, if that's what he wants to do. But it doesn't do any good if your team can't execute those plays. Bill's teams have a wide base of plays to work from and they all work.

That can really affect your own coaching. We've been hurt because I've tried too hard to cover all the possibilities and haven't really practiced enough against anything.

You have to play your own game. The teams that have been most successful against the 49ers are teams like the New York Giants, the Chicago Bears before last season, and the Minnesota Vikings, teams that were very strong physically. They didn't get caught up in trying to figure out what the 49ers were doing. They just went out and played their game.

Another thing about Bill: He's created an environment that makes it possible to have very good defensive teams. A lot of offensive coaches almost seem to enjoy having their defenses fail, so they can look good in comparison. But Bill isn't like that. We often talk about defensive coaches and what they do, but they can't do it without a head coach who creates the right kind of environment.

Bill has been most successful when he's had great defensive teams. The 1984 champion, in particular, was a great defensive team. They shut down a great offensive team like the Miami Dolphins and made it easy for the offense to look good. When I see Bill I tell him he's a great defensive coach.

—As told to GLENN DICKEY

COACHES WHO WILL BE FIRED

1. Joe Walton, Jets. His team hasn't been the same since its December swoon in 1986 when the Jets' lost their last five regular-season games. And Joe Walton hasn't been the same coach. Although Walton hung in there last season while the Jets again collapsed, missing the playoffs and finishing last in the division, it is not likely that he can survive another cellar finish—and that is where the Jets will wind up.

2. Frank Gansz, Chiefs. Two years ago he was a players' coach. A popular special teams coach who was named to replace John Mack-

ovic—less than a month after Mackovic guided K.C. to its first playoff appearance since '71. Last year there was nothing special about Gansz or the Chiefs, who were buried in the muck of the AFC West.

3. Sam Wyche, Bengals. He's gotten so many votes of confidence you know he's going to be history. Yet, he survived last year's 4-11 season which included some horrible coaching blunders. But this year the Bengals will have to make the playoffs for Wyche to survive. And no one outside of Riverfront Stadium really thinks they can do it.

—M. B.

WORST COACHING DECISIONS OF 1987

1. Sam Wyche, Bengals. With 54 seconds left in a game against the 49ers, the Bengals had the ball on their own 45-yard line, figuring they could just run out the clock with a 26-21 lead. With six seconds left, the Bengals faced a fourth-and-25 situation. Determined to run the clock out, Wyche called for a running play. The Bengals' James Brooks carried for a loss of five yards, which left the 49ers with two seconds to try to come up with a miracle. Sure enough, Joe Montana found Jerry Rice in the endzone for a game-winning 25-yard TD pass. "We miscalculated by two seconds," said the distraught Wyche after the game.

2. Jerry Glanville, Oilers. Against Denver in the playoffs, the Oilers had their offensive game plan set before the start of the game. But they didn't anticipate having bad field position, which forced them to begin their first drive from their own 5-yard line. But keeping with the script, the Oilers on their second offensive play called the Stagger Lee play—a lateral from quarterback Warren Moon to running back Mike Rozier. Sure enough, Rozier dropped the ball, the Broncos recovered on the one-yard line, quickly scored, and were on their way to an easy 34-10 victory and another trip to the AFL Championship Game.

3. Buddy Ryan, Eagles. Against the Redskins, with the score tied 10-10, the Eagles tried a fake punt on fourth-and-12. A penalty against the Eagles brought the ball back to their own 28-yard line, now facing fourth-and-27. But Ryan forgot to call off the fake. Philadelphia punter John Teltschik ran for 10 yards, falling 17 yards short of a first down. The Redskins took over, went in for a score, and ended up beating the Eagles 34-24.

4. Sam Wyche (Again). Against Pittsburgh this time, the Bengals were driving toward the tying field goal. On fourth down with 18 seconds left, Boomer Esiason completed a key pass for a first down. But rather than let Esiason hustle to the line of scrimmage where he could stop the clock with an out-of-bounds pass, Wyche sent in the field goal team as the clock was ticking down. Unfortunately for Cincinnati, time expired before the unit could set up, prompting Pittsburgh coaches to say on the way down to the locker room, "Wicky Wacky screwed up another one." —S. C.

BEST COACHING DECISIONS OF 1987

1. Joe Gibbs, Redskins. In Super Bowl XXII Gibbs decided that Denver's overaggressive defense would be vulnerable to the counter-trap and that rookie Timmy Smith would be the best player to run it. Gibbs was right on both accounts, as Smith, substituting for George Rogers, rushed for 204 yards.

2. Dan Reeves, Broncos. On a Monday night game against Chicago, Reeves put John Elway in the Shotgun on almost every play to negate the Bears' blitzing defense. Elway passed for 341 yards, stayed in the Shotgun for most of the remaining season, and became the AFC's Player of the Year.

3. Joe Gibbs. Against Chicago in the playoffs, he decided to use Doug Williams as his starting QB in place of Jay Schroeder. Williams roared through the playoffs to the Super Bowl victory. In three postseason games he passed for 666 yards with



Gibbs called Smith's number and came up with Super results.

seven touchdowns and only two interceptions.

4. Marion Campbell, Falcons. Before the Redskins game, he recognized that David Archer wasn't going to get the job done at QB. So

he inserted Scott Campbell into the starting lineup, where he stayed for the rest of the season. Against Washington, Campbell responded with a 271-yard effort in a 21-20 victory.

—S. C.

A HEAD COACHING JOB IN THEIR FUTURES?

When coach hunting, a team first considers offensive and defensive coordinators because of their experience with handling staffs and game plans. For obvious reasons, assistants from winning teams get the most calls.

When the ax falls, these phones could be ringing:

1. Tony Dungy, Steelers defensive coordinator. Dungy, 32, is the NFL's youngest coordinator. Three times in Dungy's six years, Pittsburgh has ranked sixth or better in total defense. One of Dungy's assets is an ability to improvise. Using rookies Rod Woodson, Delton Hall, and Thomas Everett, he transformed the secondary, a team weakness, into a strength (27 interceptions, including five for TDs in '87).

"Everybody wants to be a head coach," Dungy said two years ago when it was rumored he'd be replacing Cincinnati's Sam Wyche. "If someone offered me a [head coaching] job, I'd certainly be flattered and look into it. But it's not a situation where I'm sitting here thinking that I have to get a head coaching job in two years or five years or whenever."

2. Bill Belichick, Giants defensive coordinator. Belichick, 36, like Dungy, is considered one of the young lions of his profession. Bill Parcells gave the defense to Belichick when he took over as head coach in '82. The Giants have fin-

ished seventh or better in total defense four times in six years under Belichick.

Belichick's forte is an ability to recognize and counter offensive trends. "Defenses have to adjust to the changes," he said. "It's not just like you wave the magic wand one year and it turns out great."

Washington's Joe Gibbs said Belichick is adept at changing schemes. "They have a great scheme, but it's not an all-or-nothing defense," he said. "They'll come right at you, but rarely will they sell out on the blitz. The Giants do a great job with their package."

3. Dan Henning, Redskins offen-

sive assistant/receivers coach. The Raiders wanted the former Falcons head coach (22-41-1 from 1983 to '86), an expert in the passing game, to replace Tom Flores, but the fine print got in the way. If a team wants to upgrade its passing game, Henning is a sound choice.

"He has a tremendous understanding of the passing offense," said Joe Theismann, who worked under Henning when the latter served his first tenure as Redskins assistant (1981-82). "He has done a good job with Washington, and I thought he did a good job with the Falcons. They were premature in letting him go."

—J. D.

Defensive whiz Tony Dungy may be a head coach before long.



FOOTBALL RATINGS & Inside Stuff

In my position as an outside linebacker, I must consider the tight end as a multiple-threat player—he catches passes, blocks, runs decoy patterns, and sometimes goes in motion to try to disrupt defensive formations.

Some tight ends do one of those things well. Others do two. Shuler does all of them professionally, and I know when we play the Jets it's a long, tough game. Shuler knows what to do, knows how to do it, and usually presents challenges other tight ends don't present, mostly because of his experience.

He's strong, blocks well, and has deceptive speed. He isn't one of the fastest receivers in the National Football League, but he knows how to find an open area. Some of the better receivers, the more experienced ones, can feel their way through a defense and just sense where a hole exists. Shuler is one of those, and it adds to the complications of covering him.

In our defensive scheme, I seldom go one-to-one with him, or any tight end. We play a lot of zone, and my responsibilities include more

Tippett: 'When we play the Jets it's a long, tough afternoon.'

than just dropping back to defend against the pass. There are times when I'm on an all-out pass-rush, and many of those times I have to try to get past Shuler. That's how I know just what a good blocking tight end he is.

There are times, of course, when I have single coverage on Shuler, and the thing that occupies me the most is his intelligence and ability to read the defensive coverage. Mickey doesn't rely on his speed. Few tight ends really do. But he has a knack of finding a hole or making the catch in heavy traffic. There are times when you can cover a receiver about as well as he can be covered, and he still makes the catch because he's tough or determined or just able to maneuver in the middle of all those arms and bodies. Mickey Shuler is that kind of tight end.

He always seems to come up with a few big catches in the two games against us [Last season, Shuler caught 10 passes for 95 yards against the Patriots, in two non-strike games.] I guess a few were against me, or at least in zones where I had some of the assignment.

Tight ends have become more important in the game in the last decade or so, and Mickey Shuler is a perfect example of how a tight end can help his team. He does many things, most of them difficult, and to be a successful tight end he must do them all well. He does.

WHAT ST. LOUIS SPORTS FANS CAN NOW DO ON FALL SUNDAYS

1. Root for the other Cardinals.

They win more and they play almost as long in the fall as that other team did.

2. Travel down I-40 to Kansas City.

If you need an NFL fix, the Chiefs are your best bet. Be prepared to be disappointed by them, however.

3. Visit the Arch.

No, don't go to that fast food restaurant. Well, you can if you want. But visit the one major tourist attraction in St. Louis.

Chances are if you've lived in St. Louis for any length of time, you've never bothered to go down to where the Arch is and ride to the top of it and look at the Mississippi. It's not a bad sight.

4. Watch the hockey Blues. Yes, I know. Watching this team play might make you blue. But let's face it, after November, it's the only game in town.

5. Stay home. That's what Cardinals fans did so much of the last few seasons. (Not that they can be blamed very much.) And that's why you're missing a football team. —M.B.

ANDRE TIPPETT VS. MICKEY SHULER

Patriots All-Pro linebacker Andre Tippett, 28, is entering his seventh year in the NFL. Tight end Mickey Shuler, 31, is beginning his 11th season, all with the Jets. These two face off twice a year, and though they don't bump heads on every play, they know each other's talents very well.

TIPPETT: In my job I have to be concerned with more than just the tight end, but when we play the Jets I am impressed with the experience and skills of Mickey Shuler.

SHULER: I enjoy playing against Andre Tippett because I enjoy a great challenge, and Andre certainly is that. He may well be the best linebacker in the league, and yes, I know the others. Lawrence Taylor, Carl Banks, a few others. But none of them are any better than Andre. He's big, strong, fast, almost a prototype linebacker for the 1980s.

I enjoy playing against Taylor, too, and the guy from New England who had to retire this year, Don Blackmon. It's a challenge and it's what any professional player should look forward to—the chance to play against the best.

The way I respond to that kind of test is to play my best. Andre always brings out the best in me, and whether I have a good game against him isn't necessarily the most important thing. Remember that he's at the top of his position, so playing at my best doesn't mean I'll win our confrontation.

It really isn't a win or lose situation, as I think about it. I sure won't win every battle, but if I can make about half the things happen that I'm hoping for, I consider it winning. You can't expect to do well against Andre, but if you can hold your position, do what needs to be done to help the team get its best chance at winning, then you'll be successful. Or at least you can feel that way, along with feeling the bruises and aches usually associated with playing against Andre.

No, I don't mean to imply anything about the way he plays except that he's tough. He's a 100% clean guy, no late shots, no cheap shots. He's tough to block because not only is he very strong and quick, but he has great experience and that black belt is karate. He's as good a linebacker as I've ever faced.

Andre's the first defender I'll get to at the start of a play. It's always a challenge. If I'm a pass receiver, I have to get free of him. If it's a running play, I have to block him. It's a challenge either way, and playing against someone as sound as Tippett means never being able to relax. Not for a second.

Also, I can't assume things. I can't figure that what worked the play before will work now. I can't assume that what worked against another linebacker the week before will work against him, because chances are it won't.

In fact, my favorite action picture is one in which I'm catching an 'up and out' pass against Andre. It's unusual, you know, because it's not that easy to get him in a position where I can make the catch.

Overall, he's probably the toughest linebacker I ever have to deal with, and about the only way I can explain it is that I never let my guard down, that despite the fact that Andre is bigger than me—and probably faster—I always play well against him. I have to.

—As told to D.K.

QUESTIONS PHOENIX FANS WILL BE ASKING IN '88

1. Why are we going to the stadium on Sundays? A generation of Valley of the Sun worshippers have grown up with Arizona State football as part of their Saturday nights. Watching Sunday afternoon football will change some habits and the dress code.

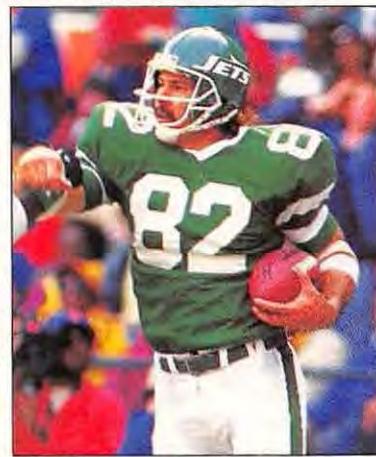
2. If the Cardinals win, will they go to the Rose Bowl? This is a college town and the prize is the Rose Bowl where the Pac-10 champ plays each year. It would be better if the Super Bowl were played in Pas-

adena this year rather than in Miami.

3. Where's the band, baton twirlers, and ASU cheerleaders? Like it or not, the Cards biggest product will be football. If that's not good enough, there is not much other pageantry for diversion. In its worst years (and there haven't been many of them), ASU put on a show, especially at halftime.

5. How come the Cards lose more than win? That question was almost never asked at ASU games. But it's sure to be asked this season.

—M.B.



Shuler: 'You can't expect to do well against Andre.'

TOM LANDRY'S GREATEST VICTORIES

Few head coaches have had as much of an impact on their teams as Tom Landry of the Dallas Cowboys. He has been, after all, the only coach in the history of the franchise. Now, with two years remaining on what he hints will be his last contract, Landry looks back on the five most important victories of his Dallas career.

1. The first-ever "Super Cowboys"—Dallas 24, Miami 3, Super Bowl VI, Jan. 16, 1972. This was extremely significant to the franchise because we had struggled for years and couldn't win the so-called 'big one.' We had the same nucleus of the team for the next half dozen years or so, guys like Bob Lilly, Roger Staubach, some of the offensive linemen, some of the running backs. When they finally got it, won it, they started to think of themselves differently. In fact, it was the year before that really put us over the top. We lost that Super Bowl [V] to Baltimore [16-13, on a Jim O'Brien field goal with just three seconds remaining], and that was the toughest loss of all. [Afterward] Lilly did the most amazing thing. He ripped off his helmet and threw it up the field about 50 yards. It became the symbol of the Cowboys, total frustration, the culmination of four years of frustration.

But yes, winning that Super Bowl set us up for victories later. For the Cowboy franchise, that was the most important victory of all.

2. Roger Staubach's last game—Dallas 35, Washington 34, Dec. 16, 1979. Roger has probably been the most important player in the history of our franchise, and he had become so famous as a last-minute winner that it started to feel unreal, somehow. He provided great inspirational leadership to the entire team, and gave us the feeling that we just couldn't lose.

Well, he told me that he was going to retire after the 1979 season, and while I respected his privacy and didn't make any announcement, I remember playing that last game against Washington with a lot of sadness in my heart.

Sure enough, we're losing by two touchdowns, 34-21, and it was late in the fourth quarter. I knew that he wasn't going to leave football as a losing quarterback. And he put together two of the most brilliant drives I can remember.

3. The Hail Mary pass against Minnesota—Dallas 17, Minnesota 14, Dec. 28, 1975. This is what Roger was best known for, but this particular season he had to work harder at it than ever before, because we had more rookies—12 of them—than I had carried on the roster in a decade.

With almost no time, he just fired one deep into the corner of the endzone to wide receiver Drew Pearson. Drew was surprised as the Vikings when he was able to catch the ball and step into the endzone, and we won, 17-14.

4. Super Bowl XII—Dallas 27, Denver 10, Jan. 15, 1978. This was notable to me not because we were able to beat a team with Craig Morton at quarterback, the same guy who was our quarterback for 10 years. It was memorable because it was the best defense of mine had ever played. Ever.

Our front four, especially, was at its peak, that great collection of Ed (Too Tall) Jones, Randy White, Harvey Martin, and John Dutton. We had a great defensive team and those guys were all at the peak of their careers.

5. The first non-loss—Dallas 31, New York Giants 31, Dec. 4, 1960. Of this list of five games, I purposely kept my favorite for last. On my own list of self-satisfying victories, I'd have to put this game number one.

It was our first season and we hadn't won a game. It was late—we had just two more to play after this one—and it looked like we'd have a perfect 12-game losing streak.

I had just left the Giants, where I had played and then acted as a player-coach for nearly 10 years, and the game was in Yankee Stadium. The Giants were great then, just great, and especially on defense.



Super Bowl VI was Landry's 'most important victory of all.'

They still had Andy Robustelli and Rosey Grier and Sam Huff and Harland Svare, so many great players. And we had just a terrible team, young guys and older ones who really didn't have much of anything left.

The game ended in a 31-31 tie, and for us to have scored that many points against such a great defense . . . well, I have always thought of that one as my most memorable.

—As Told to D. K.

RE-EVALUATING THE '85 DRAFT

The Class of 1985 draft picks, some of whom turned out not so classy, will come under close scrutiny in coming weeks. These rookies have had three years to establish themselves in one sense or another.

"Sometimes you can't tell about a player's ability for three years, depending upon the depth you have," says Denver Broncos coach Dan Reeves. It also often takes that long for a player to adapt to the regimen of the NFL.

But after three years, there's usually clear indication of a player's ability.

"Hopefully, within three years, they'll establish themselves as starters or as guys who will be starters eventually," Reeves says.

So now is the best time to eval-

uate the 1985 draft. Here are the five players who have given their teams the best return on their draft investments:

1. Mark Bavaro, Giants (Notre Dame). A fourth-round pick. A Pro Bowl player, nobody can figure out how he lasted past the first round.

2. Barry Wilburn, Redskins (Mississippi). Chosen in the eighth round, he led the entire league with nine interceptions last year, three more than his closest rival.

3. Raleigh McKenzie, Redskins (Tennessee). This 11th-round pick is a set member of the Redskins' famous offensive line and further tribute to the Washington scouting system led by general manager, Bobby Beathard.

4. Ron Matthes, Seahawks (Virginia). He spent his first year on injured reserve, then moved in as the Seahawks starting left tackle

where he has remained since his first game in 1986.

5. Lonnie Young, Cardinals (Michigan State). Moving into the starting lineup, he hasn't had many interceptions, but he has established himself as a strong tackle.

And here are the biggest busts in the 1985 draft:

1. Ethan Horton, Chiefs (North Carolina). He was supposed to fill the void left by the death of Joe Delaney, and instead he added to the Chiefs' woes at running back, gaining only 146 yards before the team released him.

2. Kevin Allen, Eagles (Indiana). This first-round pick lasted one unproductive season before the Eagles released him. He is serving a 15-year prison term in New Jersey after being convicted of sexually assaulting a woman on a beach.

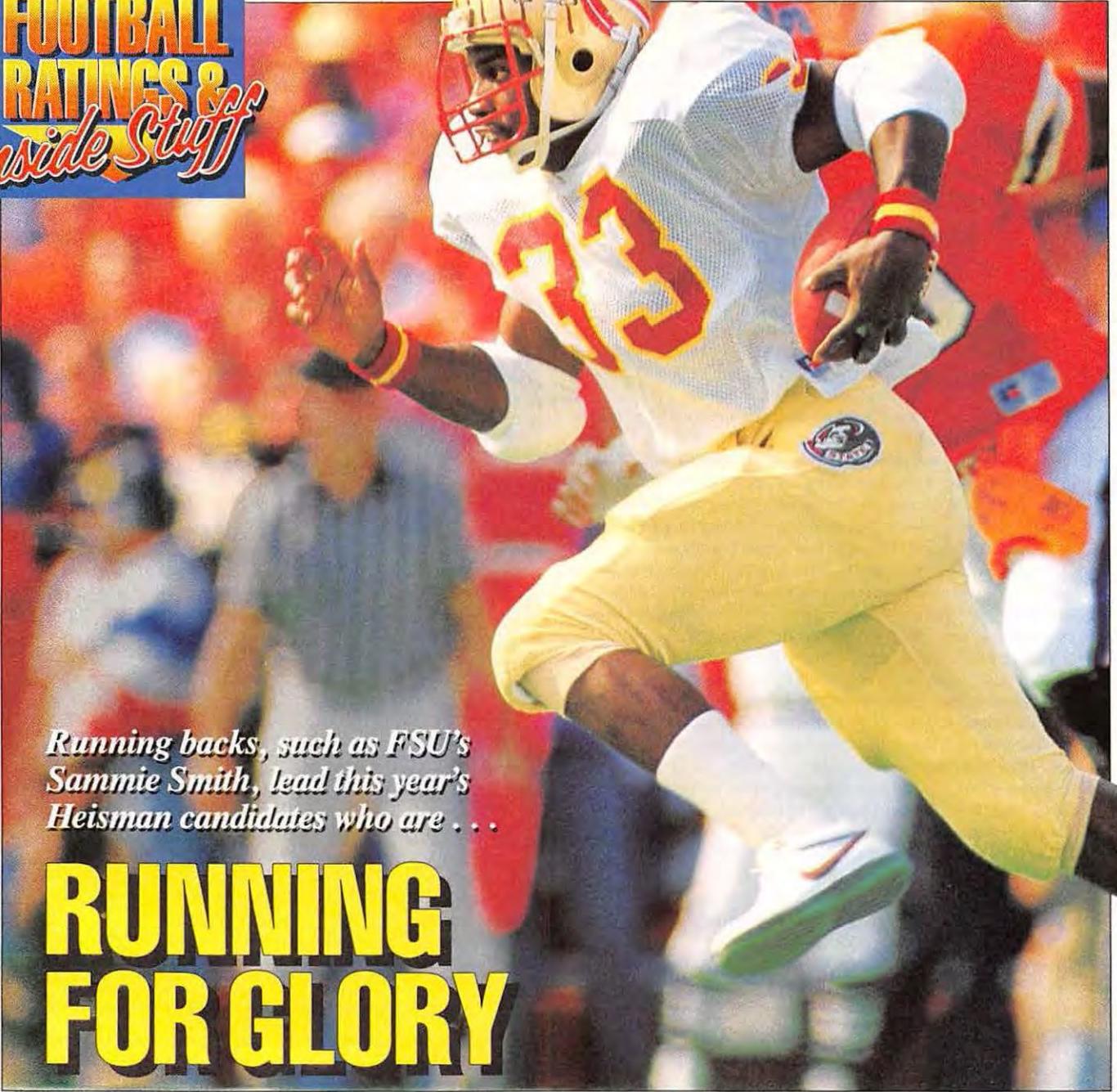
3. Darryl Sims, Steelers (Wiscon-

sin). Chosen in the first round because the Steelers were desperate for a dominating pass-rusher. Sims wasn't it. He had two sacks in two years when the Steelers finally released him.

4. Owen Gill, Seahawks (Iowa). A second-rounder, Gill didn't even make it past training camp when the Seahawks realized he had a weight problem and they cut him. He ended up in Indianapolis, carried the ball 98 times for 490 yards, and now he's out of football. His claim to fame is that he had a bit part in the Eric Dickerson trade.

5. Richard Johnson, Oilers (Wisconsin). This first-rounder has started one game in the last two seasons, with three starts in his undistinguished career. He has three career interceptions, toiling in an unspectacular secondary.

—S. C.



Running backs, such as FSU's Sammie Smith, lead this year's Heisman candidates who are . . .

RUNNING FOR GLORY

LISTEN UP, AMERICA, SOME PRESSING QUESTIONS STILL NEED to be answered before we progress any deeper into this election year. Among them: Of all the men running, is our best candidate the one who runs hardest? Do we take into consideration who is the most difficult to pin down? What about past accomplishments: are they as important as one's current achievements? And is there more to be said for the guy who takes opponents' best shots and moves onward or the one who maneuvers elusively through the opposition, taking only glancing blows?

Certainly these are but a few of the issues that must be evaluated before voters begin marking their ballots. For when it is time to elect the 1988 Heisman Trophy winner, it may not be a question of who is the best college football player, but who is the best running back.

Twenty Division I running backs who high-stepped their way to 1,000-yard rushing seasons last year return for 1988 looking for more mileage and glory. Any of them could receive Heisman votes. So for your college football viewing pleasure, we nominate four who will be in the running, so to speak.

First, there are the **Smiths**, **Emmitt** and **Sammie**. They have no kinship, but they have no trouble relating. Emmitt Smith runs the football for the University of Florida Gators; Sammie Smith for the Florida State Seminoles. Both do it well. As a freshman last season, Emmitt chewed up 1,341 yards for

the 6-6 Gators. Sophomore Sammie tossed in 1,230 for the 11-1 Seminoles.

The folks from Alabama, however, see no reason for debate. Senior **Bobby Humphrey** is back from a 1,255-yard season and is already the Crimson Tide's all-time leading rusher. So what's the question?

Well, the question at Penn State concerns senior **Blair Thomas**. Can he come back from a knee injury suffered during practice for last year's Citrus Bowl? If he can, the Nittany Lions believe they have the nation's best running back.

"It's an amazing year," says Gil Brandt, the Dallas Cowboys vice president of personnel development. "Last season was a year for wide receivers; this one will probably be the year of the running back. There are so many good players: the Smiths and Humphrey and Thomas if he's healthy."

"There's an almost unbelievable quality of running backs, some who are very good most people don't even know about yet."

They will soon. In addition to the firm of Smith, Smith, Humphrey, and Thomas, there's Iowa State's **Joe Henderson**, Texas' **Eric Medcalf**, Temple's **Todd McNair**, and Georgia's **Tim Worthy**, all with NFL dollars in their future.

Indeed, more backs with All-America potential are around this year than there were Democratic Party primary hopefuls. And great running backs and successful politicians do seem to have many similarities. They are both at

their best when being elusive, yet somehow moving straight forward. And both are at their best in front of cheering crowds.

So, the floor is now open for debate.

Of our four front-runners, the Gators' Emmitt Smith is the most interesting prospect.

As a true freshman last year, barely 18 years old when the season began, he ran for 1,341 yards to become only the third freshman—Herschel Walker and Tony Dorsett are the others—to rush for more than 1,300 yards in a season. He finished ninth in the Heisman voting, the highest finish for any returning player this year, and was a consensus national freshman of the year.

Yet, when he came to Florida from Pensacola (Fla.) Escambia High School as one of the most heavily recruited prospects in the South, he arrived dragging a large question mark.

His numbers (8,804 career yards in high school) were gaudy but his size (5'10", 185 pounds) and speed (4.55 in the 40) were only average and produced plenty of doubters.

One of the nation's most recognized recruiters, Max Emfinger, tagged him "a lugger, not a runner." He went on to say that "Emmitt Smith is not a franchise player."

Even Florida head coach Galen Hall had his doubts, leaving Smith on the bench when the Gators opened their season against Miami. But with the Hurricanes on the way to a lopsided victory, Hall gave Smith some brief second-half playing time.

He carried the ball five times for 16 yards, but one carry was a cutting, twisting burst up the middle for 12 yards. Watching that run from the sideline, Hall realized for the first time he had someone special.

"I saw that run and thought, 'Hey, this kid is a little better than we thought,'" Hall remembered.

The next week against Tulsa, Smith remained on the bench early, but entered the game late in the first quarter and ran for 109 yards on 10 carries, one of them a 66-yard touchdown.

A week later, making his first start, Smith carried 39 times against Alabama for 224 yards—both school records—and two touchdowns.

Before he was finished for the season, Smith had eight 100-yard rushing games, averaged 121.9 yards per game (131.1 as a starter), 5.9 yards per carry, and became the first freshman in Gators history named first team All-Southeastern Conference.

He also created a whole new pastime for those who tried to explain how a running back with supposedly such ordinary size and speed could produce such extraordinary results.

"Emmitt does not have the great speed, but he does have great vision and balance," Hall said. "He's very strong in the lower body and that's what separates him from the other people."

Gators teammate David Williams, a second team All-SEC offensive tackle who Smith loves to run behind, is more to the point. "He's just awesome," Williams said.

"I think I play the game smart," Smith said. "And my vision does have a part in that. A lot of defensive players feel that in certain situations I'm not looking at them, [but] I do see them and I see my blocking setting up. What I try to do is act like I'm not looking at them, and set up my offensive linemen or wide receivers for a good crack block so I can go on the other side of them."

"A number of things make a running back click. I feel the need to win and the drive to win. I think of myself as a talented running back. And as long as our team is competing for the same goal, I should contribute 110% to make that goal come true."

With four games last season of 170 yards or more, Smith already holds four



Alabama's Humphrey used speed and strength to rush for 1,255 yards and 11 TDs last year.

of the top 12 single-game performances in Florida Gators history. Before Smith arrived, Florida had seen a running back rush for 170 or more yards in a game just nine times in 80 years. Smith did it four times in his first five college starts.

"It's not fair to Emmitt for people to start comparing him to Tony Dorsett and Herschel Walker," Hall said. "He's played one season so far. But if he stays

Florida's dazzling Emmitt Smith can visualize greatness.



FOOTBALL RATINGS & Inside Stuff

about Emmitt Smith last year. He proclaimed that his Smith, Sammie, is "the most neglected running back in college football."

Although Sammie Smith, another Florida high school product, came out of Apopka High School two years earlier with even greater expectations than Emmitt, he lost his freshman year to a medical redshirt after suffering a stress fracture in his left leg and then missed most of his second season because of a nagging shoulder injury. Then last year, despite running for 1,230 yards on 172 carries—111 fewer yards than Emmitt, but on 57 fewer carries—he was lost in the whirl of attention paid to his youthful namesake in Gainesville.

"We played six running backs last year and I'm more interested in his per-carry average," Bowden said. "Everything they say about Emmitt Smith is true. But our guy is 20 pounds bigger, four inches taller, and faster."

That is also true.

Sammie Smith is 6'2", 220 pounds, and won the 100-yard dash in the 1987 Metro Conference track and field championships. "Jeez, wouldn't that make a defensive cornerback cry?" FSU track coach Dick Roberts laughed last year as Smith broke the tape with a 9.53.

If it didn't then his nation-leading 7.2 yards per carry average should choke up a lot of opposing coaches.

The one way to judge a running back is by his per-carry average," Sammie Smith said. "Every time I touch the football I want to get at least seven yards. I don't get to carry the ball here as much as most of the guys who led the nation and were ahead of me last year. But I had the best per-carry average.

"That's the most important thing to me. When I get the ball I want to make something happen."

Sammie Smith has proved a man of his word. He has scored 13 touchdowns in his career, 11 of those on plays of 20 yards or longer.

"The thing that some people don't understand about Sammie is what a physical ball carrier he is," Bowden said. "He doesn't shy away from contact with the football under his arm, and he really delivers a lick."

"With his strength and speed, a simple drive play can go 70, 80, 90 yards, because when Sammie has the ball and he's through the line of scrimmage, he is both the strongest and fastest player on the field."

"I said last year when people were tossing out the names of all the Heisman Trophy candidates that Sammie Smith was as good as any of them and that's just by stacking his statistics next to theirs. When you consider his role in our offense and his ability, I think he is a definite Heisman front-runner."

So far, the only question about Smith is his proneness to injury. As a freshman he was granted a medical redshirt after suffering a stress fracture in his left leg while gaining 74 yards on 12 carries against Nebraska in the second game of the season. The next year, he missed two games with a shoulder injury and struggled at other times, finishing the regular season with 611 yards, but a healthy 5.9 per-carry average.

Even last year, a slight knee injury prevented Smith from playing in the Seminoles' opener against Texas Tech, but he came back the next game with 244 yards on just 19 carries against East Carolina.

"Honest, I really don't consider myself injury-prone," he said. "My freshman year I had to take a redshirt because of a stress fracture, but to this day I don't know what the cause of it was."

"Injuries are something you can't look ahead and know when they're

healthy, I would think that before he's through he should be right up there."

For now, however, there is a question of whether he's the best running back in his state.

Florida State coach Bobby Bowden is willing to argue the point, especially after hearing so much

coming. I just ask the Lord to be with me when I'm on the field, because I know what I'm capable of when I'm healthy."

Alabama's Bobby Humphrey and Penn State's Blair Thomas can say the same thing. But then they have to prove they are healthy.

On April 7, Humphrey underwent bone-graft surgery on the fifth metatarsal of his left foot after being injured during spring drills. The surgery was judged successful, and Alabama coach Bill Curry expects Humphrey to be at full speed when fall practice opens.

Raised in Birmingham, Ala., Humphrey used to sell Cokes at Legion Field during Alabama games played there. "I'd try to sell about five cases real quick, so I could make some money, then watch the rest of the game," he said.

Now, the state of Alabama is watching him. In its storied football history, Alabama has never had a Heisman Trophy winner. If Humphrey becomes the first, it could do wonders for the stadium vending business. "Sometimes I just sit back and visualize where I used to be," Humphrey said. "I've come a long way."

And by all expectations, he's still going. At Alabama, they give an "I Like to Practice Award" during spring football. No, a third-team offensive guard did not win it. Humphrey, the star, did.

"He comes to work with the same intensity every day," Curry said. "Frankly, some of the great backs I've been around were selfish, but Bobby's not that way."

At 6'1", 201 pounds, Humphrey has shown the ability to drive for short yardage and sprint long runs. "But I'm the type of guy who prefers to make a tackler miss me," he said.

Either way, Alabama quietly started a "Humphrey for Heisman" campaign last season, so the foundation is there, ready for a news update.

For Penn State's Thomas, it is not that simple.

On December 4, as the Nittany Lions were preparing for the Florida Citrus Bowl, Joe Paterno pronounced Blair Thomas next season's Heisman Trophy leader. Although out of character for Paterno, he had good reason. Thomas had run for 1,414 yards, the third-highest single-season total in Penn State history, averaging 128.6 yards per game. He also led his team in receptions (23) and scoring (80 points).

"There is no question in my mind, if Blair stays healthy and continues to work the way he has, he will be the leading candidate for the Heisman Trophy," Paterno said last December. "Not just

one of them, he will be the leading candidate regardless of whoever else is around."

The key word was "healthy." Five days after Paterno spoke, Thomas' knee went out during an informal workout. Complete reconstructive surgery was needed. Doctors judged a recovery period from nine to 12 months. Even Thomas spoke of a redshirt year. But now, Paterno says "it's a 50-50 situation." And the reason is Thomas' dedication.

The 5'11", 190-pounder from Philadelphia traded in his shoulder pads for a life preserver and literally dove head first into his rehabilitation.

Along with exercises, electric stimulation, and whirlpool treatment, much of his rehab work has taken place in a tank filled with water, in which he jogs. "They really need to strap me in 'cause I can't swim," Thomas said.

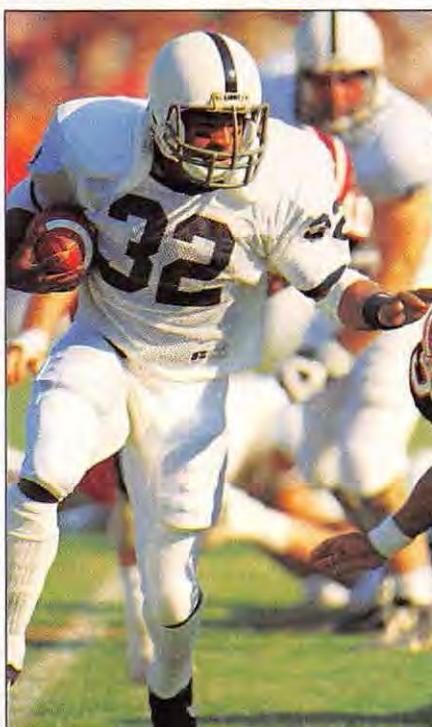
The lengthy rehabilitation has given Thomas plenty of time to think, and lately he has started to think about this season.

"I've got a good attitude," Thomas said. "I believe I can come back as good as I was or maybe better. No one will work harder or dedicate themselves more. But I'm not going to force it. I'm either going to be ready for the preseason or I'll wait. I'm not going to go out there and injure myself again."

Which is fine with Paterno. "As I've said repeatedly, we're not going to jeopardize his future by putting him in there before he's ready," the coach said. "I've been around a lot of good football players since I've been here and Blair Thomas is probably the best all-around back I've ever coached."

So there we have it, the men who want to lead our nation . . . in rushing. Now all that is left is to see how each runs his campaign.

—MICK ELLIOTT



Blair Thomas, if he can stay healthy, is as good as any back.

TOUGHEST PROGRAMS TO GET OVER THE HUMP—AND KEEP THERE

Some college football programs—Oklahoma, Penn State, Michigan, etc.—will rarely fall from the Top 20. November often finds these teams in the running for the national title. At the other end of the spectrum are the Rices, Kansas States, and Northwesterns, who define “winning season” as one with wins.

Some programs have recently jumped into national contention by taking advantage of their resources: Miami, by parlaying a pro-style offense with an attractive campus; Texas A&M, by making the financial commitment to lure and retain a big-name coach in Jackie Sherrill; Clemson, by making the greatest football commitment in a league that’s forever thinking hoops.

Then we have the schools that will never get over the hump. While they aren’t mired with the Rices, they don’t have what it takes to make a Miami-like leap to join the Oklahomas.

1. California. The Bears boast a beautiful campus on the East Bay, an enrollment of 30,000, temperate weather. But when you think of Berkeley and hard-hitting, you think of campus police and billy clubs. When you think of awards, you think not of Heisman Trophies but of Nobel Prizes. To Cal’s credit, the administration doesn’t pressure the athletic department to gain more national publicity. The result on the field, though, is that the Golden Bears’ most enduring achievement was showing the nation how to avoid clipping tuba players. Cal hasn’t been to the Rose Bowl since 1958 and last shared the conference title in 1975 with UCLA in the then-Pacific 8. Only one of Cal’s coaches since 1962 has compiled a winning record (Mike White, 35-30-1 from 1972 to ’77).

2. Georgia Tech. The Southeastern Conference is king in Dixie, and the Yellow Jackets have never recovered from their decision to abandon the SEC following the 1963 season. Thinking they could avoid sharing the fruits of their success with the downtrodden members of the league, they instead stopped succeeding and haven’t played in a major bowl in 22 years. Joining the ACC in the late 1970s was simply the best alternative following failed efforts to rejoin the SEC. Tech can’t win recruiting battles with Georgia, which can offer the chance to play Auburn, Florida, and LSU, and a shot at the Sugar Bowl. Georgia Tech can offer the chance to play Virginia, Wake Forest, and Duke, and a shot at getting good tickets for the ACC basketball tournament.

3. Texas Tech. The state of Texas can serve up a big recruiting pie, but the slice doled out to the Red Raiders isn’t very filling after most of the other Southwest Conference schools have already dug in. Texas Tech has not appeared in the Cotton Bowl since joining the SWC in 1960. With a campus in Lubbock, in West Texas, Tech is isolated from the major population centers of Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and San Antonio. It has had trouble keeping successful young coaches. The Red Raiders enjoyed good times in the 1970s under Jim Carlen and Steve Sloan, but they both left for programs that weren’t exactly the toast of the nation (Carlen to South Carolina, Sloan to Mississippi). Texas Tech brought longtime Texas assistant David McWilliams to Lubbock in 1986, only to watch him drop his rebuilding program after one season when the Texas Longhorns asked him to return to replace Fred Akers.

4. Kentucky. Though football isn’t totally an ignored stepchild of basketball—the 58,000-seat Commonwealth Stadium is frequently filled—basketball will always be the game of choice, something that rival football recruiters can cite. While the Cats are an annual participant in the NCAA basketball tournament, they haven’t been to a major bowl since Bear Bryant took them to the Orange, Sugar, and Cotton in 1949, ’50, and ’51. The Wildcats have a limited home state to recruit in and are sandwiched by Big Ten powers to the north and traditional SEC powers like Tennessee and Alabama to the south. Oh, well, there’s always basketball.

5. Rutgers. The Scarlet Knights face a few obstacles every year. Namely, the Mets, Jets, Nets, Yankees, Giants, Knicks, Rangers, Islanders, and Devils. The State University of New Jersey is regarded as something of a Class AAA pro franchise by the New York-area sports fan. Rutgers decided in the early 1970s to transform the school from a pseudo-Ivy Leaguer to a major athletic power. This goal of becoming the “Stanford of the East,” combining high academic standards with winning performances on the field and at the box office, led to the end of the rivalry with Princeton. Rutgers began playing more formidable opponents at Giants Stadium, but still hasn’t got much notice. You must admire Rutgers’ resourcefulness, though. After the Knights went 11-0 in 1976 and still didn’t receive a bowl invitation, they went out and started their own bowl—the Garden State Bowl (which died on the vine after only a few years).

—JEFF MILLER



Auburn vs. Tennessee is just one of many rugged SEC matchups.

RATING THE BEST CONFERENCES

1. Southeastern. The SEC has had more teams (27) among the Top 20 in the final coaches poll this decade than any other conference. That also explains why it hasn’t had its fair share of national champions. While the Oklahomas and Clemsons bore their way through the conference season, Auburn, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, LSU, and Tennessee stage their annual free-for-all.

As Georgia coach Vince Dooley says, “From top to bottom, we have more good football teams than ever. We may even have some great teams, although we’ll never know it if we keep knocking off each other.”

2. Pac-10. After long being dominated by USC and UCLA, the rest of the Pac-10 has spent years paying back its IOUs.

Since the departure of Marcus Allen, USC’s once-vaunted ground game has been searching for a consistent 1,000-yard rusher. Add perennial bowl candidates Arizona and Arizona State, which the Pac-8 added in 1978, and the run for the Roses is no longer a two-horse race. Of the 33 USC-UCLA games in which the Rose Bowl has been at stake, only one has taken place since 1978.

3. Big Two-Little Six. OK, so Oklahoma and Nebraska are big-timers. But, c’mom guys, do you really have to spindle, fold, and mutilate Iowa State, Kansas, Kansas State, and Missouri (combined conference record of 5-21-2 last year) the way you do? Pick on somebody your own size—like Goldie Hawn’s Wildcats—why don’t ya?

Just how bad is the Little Six? So bad that 0-8 Kansas State was favored against 1-7 Kansas last season, leading KSU coach Stan Parrish to say, “This is one of the greatest tricks in betting history. We haven’t won a game or been in one.” Would you believe that K-State had lost its previous two games by a combined 112-10?

4. Big 10. The conference is competitive—even Indiana was in the Rose Bowl picture last year—but its football is ever so b-o-r-r-ring. Since Tony Eason, Chuck Long, and Jim Harbaugh left, the Big 10 has experienced a dearth at quarterback, and its offenses have reverted back to the three-yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust mentality.

That helps explain why the Big 10 goes into the toilet bowl virtually every New Year’s Day in Pasadena. (Remember, when Michigan State edged USC last January, it beat the Pac-10’s second-best team.) Until it finds some golden arms—Iowa’s Chuck Hartlieb was the only QB among the nation’s top 22 passing leaders in ‘87—the Big Ten will remain a big bore.

—PAUL LADEWSKI

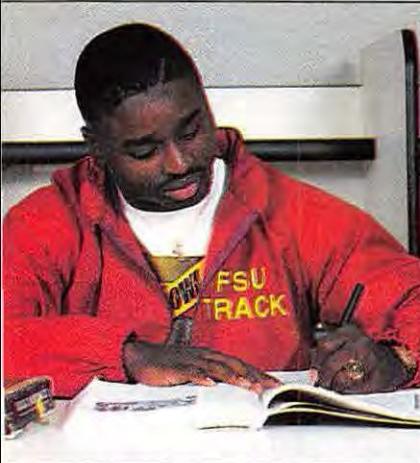
Conference	Teams in Final AP Poll, 1980 to '87									Total
	'80	'81	'82	'83	'84	'85	'86	'87		
Independents	5	4	4	5	4	3	4	5		34
Southeastern	3	2	3	4	4	4	3	4		27
Big 8	2	3	3	1	3	1	2	3		18
Big 10	3	3	1	4	2	3	3	3		22
Pac-10	3	3	4	1	3	1	4	3		22
Southwest	2	2	2	2	1	4	3	1		17
Atlantic Coast	1	2	3	1	2	2	1	1		13
Western Athletic	1	0	2	1	2	0	0	0		7



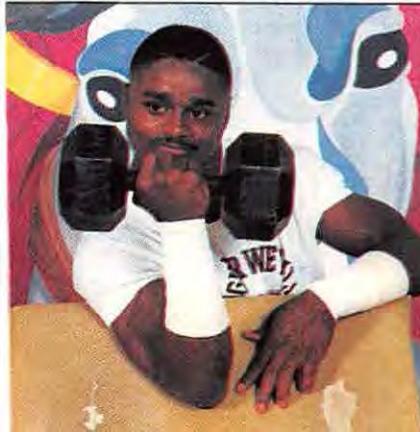
Carter's day allows him time to talk to an FSU teammate . . .



. . . and to check out a few movies on his video recorder.



But his class work requires time to hit the books, and he also trains for football.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF . . . DEXTER CARTER, FLORIDA STATE

One to two o'clock each weekday afternoon is Dexter Carter's most cherished hour during football season. It follows morning's classes, precedes afternoon's practice, and can be described in one word: *Zzzzzz*.

"That's when I go back to my room, close the door, and maybe turn on some music," the Florida State junior running back said. "Then I take a 30-minute nap."

And therein lies the reason why this stands as the most cherished—not the most fun, not the most rewarding, just the most cherished—hour in Carter's daily log. For drowsing there amid quiet tunes, Carter enjoys his only time away from the responsibilities of football and studies.

CARTER'S DAY	
7 a.m.:	Wake up, shower.
7:15-8:15 a.m.:	Breakfast.
9 a.m.:	Sociology 1000—Introduction to Sociology.
10 a.m.:	Greek and Latin 1040—Introduction to Greek & Latin.
11 a.m.:	History 2031—War History.
12:30-1 p.m.:	Lunch.
1-2 p.m.:	Free time. Takes nap.
2:30 p.m.:	Position meeting.
3:30-6 p.m.:	Practice.
6:15-7:15:	Dinner.
7:30-9:30:	Study hall.
9:30-midnight:	Free time.

properly. Or that the football office phoned professors to monitor class attendance and performance. Or that a two-hour study hall was mandatory each night.

"Everyone said how nice it'd be to be popular on campus," Carter said. "But what no one said was that you'd never have time to go out on dates."

Carter now chuckles at the idea, but when he first came to college he viewed football as an exclusively fall sport. Winters, he figured, would be time to catch up on studies and spring would be a chance to play baseball.

"I had my heart set on playing baseball," he said. "But when I went to the football coaches they said, 'What about spring football?' I didn't realize when you signed a grant-in-aid to play football you played football in the fall and the winter and the spring. It's a year-round commitment and you have to build anything else around it."

He does, however, run track after football's spring practices. But that, he says, is as much because it helps in football as because he enjoys it. He has lowered his 40-yard time to 4.3 seconds, one of the two numbers he looks at to gauge success.

The second is his grade-point average: 2.3. He must finalize his major this fall—"I'm leaning toward child development and family relations"—but no matter what he studies there is always the thought of how to squeeze a full class-load into half a schedule.

"There are times when I look at how I'm doing in this class or that class and I think, 'Man, I just don't have enough time to study. And I'm not the type of person who's going to cram for every test or stay up all night studying.'

"You can't do that because it's not like you can sleep through the next day after the test. You've got classes followed by meetings followed by practice and study hall—and you've got to be in each of those. All your day is filled up."

Then he lets loose a smile. "What's really funny is I can't imagine doing anything else."

A young man living a young man's dream. That's how Carter sees himself.

"Sometimes I wonder what it'd be like to be a regular student. How would it be to have a date on Friday night? Or maybe a regular job? Or what would I do with all that free time? I look at the regular students and see that they go to class and study, and I think that I do all that schoolwork plus have a full-time job."

"I know now that whatever I go on to do [in life] I'll have the discipline for it after this. There's so many times football players are stereotyped for being given everything they have and for never studying. But put an ordinary student in our shoes and I'd like to see how they do."

"It's tough here and that's what I like. Inside, every football player has a goal of making the pros. It's so demanding and so strenuous in college that I don't think anybody could just do it for fun. There's got to be some goal to your work. Playing in the pros is the goal we're all working toward each day."

—DAVE HYDE

HEISMANS IN THEIR FUTURES?

Here are five freshmen who Heisman voters will be considering in the next few seasons.

1. Kevin Williams, RB, UCLA.

The 6'2", 195-pounder from Big Springs, Texas, was lured to Westwood and away from several SWC teams. At best, he will be a Heisman front-runner. At worst, he'll make Bruins fans forget Gaston Green.



Will Marinovich's special diets eventually earn him a Heisman?

2. Todd Marinovich, QB, USC.

The bionic kid who was raised to be a football player, with special diets and instructions, could very well be the Trojans' first winner at quarterback.

3. Dexter McNabb, RB, Florida.

The Gators haven't had a Heisman winner since Steve Spurrier 22 years ago. McNabb, home grown in the state, will challenge UF's '87 frosh sensation, Emmitt Smith, for the honor.

4. Tony Sacca, QB, Penn St.

Sacca grew up in New Jersey, which has always been a Nittany Lion breeding ground. But Heisman candidates have been very rare in Happy Valley. Sacca could break the mold, however.

5. Reggie Finch, RB, Oklahoma.

The thing that Barry Switzer seems to do better than anyone else is recruit running backs from Texas. Billy Sims came out of that state and won the Heisman for the Sooners, and Finch, who comes from Dallas, could follow in that tradition.

—MARK BLAUDSCHUN

FIVE REASONS TO 'LOVE' NOTRE DAME

1. Overachiever reputation.

Imagine how difficult it is for Notre Dame to have its pick each year of High School All-America quarterbacks, all of whom have a passing efficiency rating to match their 150 IQ. By the way, do they have these type of problems at Columbia?

2. Lack of exposure. Only "I Love Lucy" reruns are seen more often on the tube than the Irish.

3. Sensitivity. Holding a precarious 37-0 lead against USC in 1966, Notre Dame rushed back All-America halfback Nick Eddy into the game. One year later, it led Navy 41-14 and attempted a two-point conversion. God bless Miami.

4. Mystique. Where else can a quarterback on a 1-9 team win the Heisman Trophy? Or a wide receiver-kick returner in a run-dominated offense? (See No. 2)

5. Mascot. Every university should have a leprechaun so cute and cuddly. But, really now, doesn't Lou Holtz already have enough to do?

—PAUL LADEWSKI

BEST RIVALRIES THAT AREN'T

1. OKLAHOMA-ARKANSAS: The schools are only about a two-hour drive apart but don't show the slightest interest in playing each other. Oklahoma and Arkansas haven't played a regular-season game since 1926, though they were thrown together in the 1978 and '87 Orange Bowls.

2. ALABAMA-FLORIDA STATE: There was little demand for this series the last time these border-state schools met. In 1974, Alabama was 11-0; Florida State was 1-10. But a long-term Alabama-FSU series would match the South's longtime No. 1 team with one of its new powers.

3. KENTUCKY-LOUISVILLE: It's not right that the two largest football schools in the same state have not played each other since 1924. Louisville coach Howard Schnellenberger pushed for the resumption of the old series soon after he took the Cardinals' job three years ago, but the Wildcats wouldn't have any part of it.

4. FLORIDA-MIAMI: This was an annual series until this year. Florida called a halt to it because it said it had to play seven SEC teams instead of six and wanted to play a more national schedule.

The Gators and Hurricanes won't meet again until a two-year contract for 1992-93.

—J. M.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF . . . DAVID HLATKY, AIR FORCE

David Hlatky aches. His muscles ache. His brain aches. His most compelling desire is to nestle into a pillow and leave the planet for a few hours, to crawl between some sheets and put his demonic schedule on hold.

"I'm absolutely beat," the Air Force Academy guard says after a two-hour practice. "I'm so tired you wouldn't believe it. I just want to go to bed. I just want to forget about everything. But . . ."

But he has to prepare a laboratory assignment for an astrodynamics class. And he has various other assignments to complete before he can sleep.

In 1985, when Hlatky applied for one of the 1,381 coveted academy appointments given that year, no one told him it would be easy. But he never dreamed it would be like this.

"No high school in the world can prepare you for what you go through here," says the All-WAC senior line-man. "The demands are incredible."

"The problem is, none of the benefits of being an Air Force Academy cadet are immediate. All the benefits are down-the-road benefits, and when you're 18 years old, that can be a difficult concept to understand."

When he first came to the academy as a freshman in '85, the concept was lost on Hlatky. Upperclassmen screamed at him for no apparent reason. And when the regimented segment of his day was over, he would go to practice and suffer scout-team humiliation.

"When you're a freshman here," he says, "you look up to see down."

Now, three years later, he is blessed with uncommon perspective. Remarkably successful on and off the football field, Hlatky only now realizes the opportunities his academy degree will offer him. An astronautical engineering major, Hlatky has compiled a 3.47 grade-point average.

All three of his years at the academy he has made the prestigious Superintendent's List for military and academic excellence. On the field, he has become one of the school's most accomplished players.

Two things keep Hlatky sane. Football is one. "Academy cadets are probably the only players who actually *look forward* to practice," he says. The second is the thought that success in life is virtually assured.

"Literally from the day I was born, my life's been pretty much set. My father was an engineer who helped on the Apollo projects, and I was born in the hospital at Cape Canaveral. As far back as I can remember my dream has been to fly fighter jets and become an astronaut."

"I don't want this to sound smarmy because I'm not your basic good-doobie cadet, but the longer I'm here and the more I think about it, the better I feel about where I am and where my life is going. When you're faced with this kind of adversity—when you know that nothing in your life will be tougher than what you've already been through—it's a very comfortable feeling."

So Hlatky trudges on, attending six hours of classes with names that cannot be pronounced and winding up at football practice, where he can funnel his frustrations through hellacious blocks. His life is set out before him, his direction etched in the stone of academy accomplishment.

Still, he says, "There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about what it would be like to play football at a regular school. I think about it every time I get up at 6:30 and my eyes are burning because I'm so tired. I think about it every time I go to formation. I think about it every time I've been studying for 12 or 13 hours on end for one project, and then it ends up being 'C' work."

"But you know what? I know, deep down, that I couldn't be happy anywhere else because the only place I can accomplish my goals is right here. The minute I graduate, I've got a job, and it's a job doing what I've wanted to do all my life. When you graduate from this place, you're a very special person."

—RANDY HOLTZ

HLATKY'S DAY

6:30 a.m.—Wake up, make final class preparations.

7:10 a.m.—Formation.

7:30 a.m.—Breakfast.

8 a.m.—Astrodynamics 423: Space Mission Design.

9 a.m.—Astrodynamics 435: Inertial Navigation.

10 a.m.—Professional Military Studies 440: Military Theory and Force Analysis.

11 a.m.—Engineering 495: STARSAT (special project involving the design and construction of an operational satellite).

Noon—Lunch.

12:20 p.m.—Football film session.

1 p.m.—Astrodynamics 443: Digital Control Theory and Design (2-hour class).

3 p.m.—Dress and get taped for football practice.

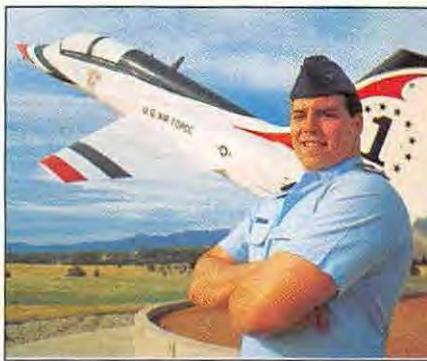
3:30 p.m.—Football position meeting.

4 p.m.—Football practice.

7 p.m.—Dinner.

8 p.m. to Midnight—Study.

Midnight to 6:30 a.m.—Sleep.



Hlatky's dream of being a jet pilot motivates him each day.



Formation finds Hlatky roused and at attention at 7:10 a.m.



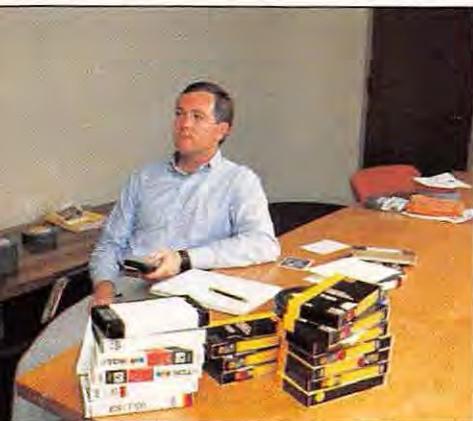
The day continues with training on high-tech equipment, and then it's on to football practice.



FOOTBALL RATINGS & Inside Stuff

group was Kevin Williams of Texas' Spring High School, considered the finest prep running back in the country.

Rees was asked to give us a little insight into what he does and how he does it.



UCLA's Rees: 'It helps that kids know Terry Donahue is a winner.'

sity, if kids are going both ways, those types of things. But if I'm looking at a lineman, he might look great but he also might be going against a kid who's only 160 pounds."

2. Do high school coaches exaggerate about their players?

"I've had high school coaches tell me they've got the next Herschel Walker on their team, and a lot of times they're sincere."

"But in reality a high school coach is giving you an accurate evaluation because he's telling you what he *can* do. A lot of times in watching film we see what a player *can't* do; so there's a bit of give and take."

3. What are the most difficult positions to fill?

"On defense, the most difficult to find are linemen. There just aren't a lot of

There probably is no more inexact science than trying to evaluate high school talent. How much a player develops in college often depends largely on where he goes, and the true worth of a recruiting class can't be accurately judged until the players are at least juniors.

Still, fans and alumni drool in anticipation on signing day in mid-February. Here's a look at the schools that landed the most talent during 1988.

1. Notre Dame. On paper, at least, Lou Holtz seems to have assembled the classiest class of freshmen, led by Derek Brown, a 6'7", 235-pound tight end with 4.6 speed from Merritt Island (Fla.) High School.

The Irish also are beaming about linemen Gene McGuire and Lindsay Knapp; linebackers Troy Ridgley, Arnold Ale, and Mike Smalls; and defensive backs Randy Setzer and Graylin Johnson.

2. UCLA. Terry Donahue has come up with another exciting crop, highlighted by Kevin Williams, a 6'2", 193-pound running back from Texas who rushed for more than 3,500 yards in his high school career. The Bruins picked up some gems in wide receiver Freddie Gilbert, quarterback Bret Johnson, and offensive lineman Brian Jacobs.

3. Pitt. The Panthers cleaned up again under coach Mike Gottfried, who picked up two of the nation's premier linebackers in Curtis Bray and Mike Chalenski. But the most important recruit might be running back Curvin Richards, who averaged 7.5 yards per carry as a high school senior.

A QUICKIE INTERVIEW WITH A TOP RECRUITER

Since 1979, Bill Rees has been one of the big reasons for the success of his boss, UCLA coach Terry Donahue. Rees's responsibility is recruitment, and he is one of the best at what he does. As an example, this past spring the Bruins signed 19 players, including 10 prep All-Americans. In that

them around or they're in an area of the country where we don't have much success in recruiting, i.e., the South. And when you do find a kid, unfortunately a fair majority can't get into school academically.

"On offense, the hardest to find is a true tight end—one who can block, make your sweep go, and really affect your passing game. I don't mean just running shell routes across the middle. I mean a guy who can take it deep and get man-to-man on a strong safety and beat him. They're hard to find.

"As far as quarterbacks go, you need a kid who can handle the pressure. The good ones we've had here have been smart. That's a correlation. I don't mean he's a genius, but usually your QB isn't in any academic problems."

4. What about academic standards. Have they hurt your recruiting efforts?

"Just because a player can meet the minimum NCAA requirements doesn't guarantee that we can get him into UCLA. That can frustrate you, because if you know there's a great player 20 minutes from you and UCLA can't recruit him, you also know that down the line you'll probably going to have to play against him. That's one reason for coach Donahue's philosophy of recruiting nationally, to fill the needs we can't meet here in-state."

5. How do you convince a kid that UCLA's the right place for him to be?

"It helps if you know you have a place for the kid to play. There's nothing worse than trying to convince a kid to come when he might be backing up another player for a couple of years."

"And without question, it helps that the kids know coach Donahue is a winner. Players want to know they can play on a championship team."

"Not to belittle education or academics, but no one's turned us down because our biology department wasn't strong enough. It's been [more a case of] 'Well, you've got two excellent tailbacks so I'm not coming.'"

6. Do recruiters get burned out when they're on the road?

"No question that can happen. For every eight schools I go to visit, I'll see, on an average, one player who's college caliber. I've gone four days on the road and not seen a true player, then on the fifth day I might see a player who's pretty good, but I might think he's *great* just because I haven't seen anyone in several days. So I try to set up my itinerary to see at least one kid a day I'm almost certain can play, just to keep some perspective."

7. What role do the parents have influencing a player?

"Parents will always say to their son, 'Mike, it's your decision,' until we leave the room and then it becomes, 'Mike, it's your decision until you make the wrong one.' No doubt about it, parents have an influence."

"But with some families, you meet them, and they might be dirt poor, but the kid is dressed nice, he's got the grades, he's an athlete—that kind of kid, he's going to be a tough player for you, because of what he's overcome."

—MARK WHEELER

TOP RECRUITERS

Other promising prospects headed to Pitt are offensive linemen Tony Dilazio and Mike Livorio and defensive back Baron Jackson, whose statistics are mind-boggling. If bloodlines mean anything, the Panthers got a good one in linebacker Delon Greene, the son of former Pittsburgh Steeler great Joe Greene.

4. Penn State. The word has leaked out of Happy Valley that the Nittany Lions had a banner year. The biggest catch was quarterback Tony Saccia, a strong-armed thrower from New Jersey.

Saccia is the glittering centerpiece of a class that includes highly touted linebacker Eric Renkey, two-way end John Gerak, and running backs Adam Shinnick and Bob Samuels.

Honorable Mention

Clemson. Danny Ford's prize catches are kicker Chris Gardocki, quarterback Michael Carr, and linemen Les Hall and Chester McGlockton.

Georgia. Todd Collins and Curt Douglas are top linebackers.

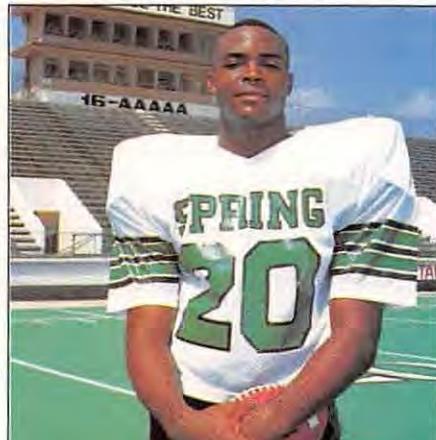
Nebraska. The standout here is lineman Dave Jensen.

Texas. Look out for quarterback Jason Burleson.

USC. The Trojans shored up their defense with three good linebackers Jeff Pease, Kurt Barber, and Matt McGee, and cornerback Lamont Hollingsworth.

—PHIL AXELROD

Running back Kevin Williams heads a talented crop of Bruin recruits.





Green is the breakaway threat the Rams desperately needed.

WR Aaron Cox, L.A.'s second pick in round one, is a 5'9", 175-pound flash of lightning who will teach young Jim Everett the joys of downfield bombing. Second-round pick Anthony Newman, a safety from Oregon, should have gone in the first round, not the second.

Future Help: Wideout Willie (Flipper) Anderson of UCLA won't catch Cox but won't be far behind; Purdue LB Fred Strickland, L.A.'s third pick in the second round, is a big hitter at 6'1", 230. Long-range help can also come from Nebraska RB Keith Jones and Wyoming DT Jeff Knapton, both No. 6 picks.

Mistakes: Not packaging a slew of lower-round picks for one more third or fourth.

CLEVELAND BROWNS

Immediate Help: Long before the draft, coach Marty Schottenheimer said the Browns—AFC runners-up two years in a row—had to strengthen "the front seven" on defense. So he did it. His first pick was Clifford Charlton, a 6'3", 235-pound pass-rushing LB from Florida; second was Clemson NT Michael Dean Perry, baby brother of the Bears' Refrigerator and by far the wiser of the Perry clan; and third was LB Van Waiters, who would have been a top five pick if he could have come in off his junior season at Indiana.

Future Help: Two DBs, Anthony Blaylock of Winston-Salem State and Thane Gash of East Tennessee, can play this game, perhaps better than some of the veteran reserves want to know.

Mistakes: Too many DBs taken lower in the draft; not a single offensive lineman, an area where the Browns will soon need help.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

Immediate Help: Wily old Ray Perkins, the head coach of the rebuilding Bucs, spent his first selection on Wisconsin OT Paul Gruber, 6'4", 290, the best of the available offensive linemen, to help protect prize QB Vinny Testaverde. Then Perkins took players for needs that were obvious—Georgia running back Lars Tate, with 3,017 yards and 36 TDs in three seasons; Auburn DT Robert Goff; Tennessee guard John Bruhin.

Future Help: Tennessee FB William Howard and Alabama RB Kerry Goode, a player Perkins recruited and coached at Alabama, who could be as good as any No. 1 pick if his wounded knees can be made sound.

Mistakes: Taking punter Monte Robbins (fourth round, Michigan), and not taking a pure pass-rushing DE in the 12 picks.

CHICAGO BEARS

Immediate Help: Bill Tobin doesn't take a back seat to anyone in scouting and decision-making. Fullback Brad Muster of Stanford, the first of two No. 1 picks, is a 6'3", 230-pound complete package—he can run inside, run outside, block, catch the ball, and think on his feet. He'll provide all the help any fullback ever did for the Bears. The second No. 1, WR Wendell Davis of LSU, won't break speed records, but he is a big-play, sure-handed possession receiver who isn't as slow as the scouts thought. Oklahoma LB Dante Jones may step in and replace Wilber Marshall.

Future Help: Temple DE Ralph Jarvis and Fuller-ton State TE Jim Thornton will both be starters in another year or two. Joel Porter, a 10th-rounder

NFL ROOKIE REPORT

Some running backs, such as Gaston Green and Brad Muster, will be immediate stars. But Saints pick Craig Heyward is a Bayou bust

By DAVE KLEIN

THE NFL DRAFT WAS MARKED this year by a paucity of blue-chip stars and a lack of depth at most critical positions.

INSIDE SPORTS has studied the choices of the 28 teams and come up with a rating report. The highest grade is four stars (★★★★), which only four teams reached. Ten clubs earned a three-star (★★★) rating, eight were

given two stars (★★), and six had the lowest rating of one star (★).

The ratings are based on the immediate and future help the draft provided, along with the mistakes made.



LOS ANGELES RAMS

Immediate Help: UCLA's 5'10", 190-pound running back Gaston Green has blazing speed (4.37 in the 40), but must fight past some work-ethic problems; he had 3,272 career yards and 34 TDs.

Michael Irvin gives the Cowboys some much-needed athleticism.

from Baylor, will get some playing time at the guard position.

Mistakes: LB Troy Johnson and OT Cesar Rentie, both Oklahoma products, rode the coattails of a superb team and may not last through summer camp.



NEW YORK GIANTS

Immediate Help: Where's the beef? Right here, with No. 1 pick Eric Moore of Indiana, 6'5", 290 pounds, and No. 2 pick John Elliott of Michigan, 6'6" and 310, who provide 600 pounds of Big Ten offensive tackle. One of them will start, probably Moore, but in the long run, it may be Elliott who turns into a 10-year fixture.

Future Help: CB Sheldon White of Miami (O.) is 5'10", 185, and fast. Fifth-round choice Jon Carter, a defensive lineman from Pitt, should grow into a job. He's 6'5", 275 pounds right now. Michigan State OG David Houle will surprise people. QB Mike Perez of San Jose State has ability, but has had a chronic hip injury.

Mistakes: Fourth-round pick Ricky Shaw of Oklahoma State, a DE who'll have to be a LB and probably won't make the transition; a pair of projected TEs, Danta Whitaker of Mississippi Valley and Steve Wilkes of Appalachian State.

NEW YORK JETS

Immediate Help: No. 1 (eighth overall) pick David Patrick Cadigan, a monstrous 6'5", 295-pound OT from USC, although he may wind up as a big-but-quick-enough guard. Terry Williams and Erik McMillan (13 career interceptions), a pair of corners from Bethune-Cookman and Missouri, could both start in the Jets' horrendous secondary.



Some thought McMillan—who didn't go until the third round—was a high second-rounder.

Future Help: OT Mike Withycombe of Fresno State, 6'5", 310, who needs to get in shape before he can get into the game; DT-DE Paul Frase of Syracuse, 6'5", 265, who needs to learn the trade; Nebraska TE Keith Neubert, who rarely played, was drafted in the eighth round, which prompted two calls from teams interested in getting him in exchange for a higher 1989 pick.

Mistakes: Equally major needs were wide receiver and linebacker—neither was filled.

CINCINNATI BENGALS

Immediate Help: The three most crying needs

were filled with the first three picks: Rickey Dixon of Oklahoma, the best pure cornerback in a decade; halfback Ickey Woods, who amazed even his coaches by blossoming last season at Nevada-Las Vegas with 1,658 yards after a bench-riding (240 yards) junior year; and underrated linebacker Kevin Walker of Maryland, 6'2", 240, has speed for the outside as well as strength for the inside.

Future Help: Guard Paul Jetton of Texas, big and quick, who needs work on his technique; Union College (N.Y.) LB Richard Romer, who could be a small-college steal.

Mistakes: Few, if any, but NT David Grant of

Stanford's Muster is one of two first-round selections who will make an immediate impact in Chicago.





Atlanta grabbed some defensive help by selecting Aundray Bruce.

West Virginia had mixed reviews at best, and hulking Herb Wester (6'7", 300) is more immobile than most OTs, but he's great to look at and maybe he'll frighten someone.

DALLAS COWBOYS

Immediate Help: The Cowboys couldn't lose in the first round—they had narrowed their expected choice down to two players, Indiana OT Eric Moore and Miami WR Mike Irvin. The Giants, just ahead of them, took Moore; ergo, Dallas took Irvin, who'll put flash in the offense (if they find a QB to get him the ball) and replace the unfortunate Mike Sherrard (who missed last year and will miss this year because of a broken leg). UCLA's Ken Norton Jr., son of the former heavyweight champ, a 6'2", 230-pound LB, was a bit of a push as the 41st player to go. But considering the Cowboys' needs, he'll start immediately.

Future Help: Two wonderfully talented offensive linemen, Oklahoma guard Mark Hutson (6'4", 280) and tackle Dave Widell (6'5", 275) from Boston College should work their way into starting roles in a year or two. Other future help might be five years away—the Cowboys took Air Force's Chad Hennings, the best defensive lineman in the country, but must wait for his enlistment obligation to be fulfilled. They waited for Roger Staubach that way once upon a time.

Mistakes: Too many eggs in Herschel Walker's basket; he needs help from a big back and didn't

get it. Cowboys drafted almost nothing for the secondary, which is what they have at present.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

Immediate Help: TE Keith Jackson of Oklahoma is a game-breaker if he can keep his attention from wandering; CB Eric Allen of Arizona State may play right away, not necessarily because he's that good but because he's that needed.

Future Help: Syracuse QB Don McPherson will come around and become the back-up to Randall Cunningham, who is the brightest young QB in the league. McPherson wants to be QB now, but he'll learn to wait. CB Eric Everett of Texas Tech has the size-speed ratio that scouts like, but he's a bit green.

Mistakes: Miami tackle Matt Patchan has injury woes and attention-span difficulties; almost nothing should be of much help from the seventh round down.

DETROIT LIONS

Immediate Help: For a team that usually drafts with all the science of Pin the Tail on the Donkey games, this one was sound, mostly because of new GM Jerry Vainisi, former Chicago Bears' genius. Bennie Blades of Miami is the best safety to come out since Ken Easley, and if he doesn't start, fire everybody. LB Chris Spielman is a too-short overachiever who'll start and bust a few heads along the way. TE Pat Carter is a hulk who must learn to play every down, but he can.

Future Help: OG Eric Andolsek of LSU is an all-out competitor; WR Jeff James of Stanford (seventh round) may turn out better than Penn State WR Ray Roundtree (third). There's just enough

promise in QB Danny McCoin (12th round) to take a long look.

Mistakes: Roundtree may be one of the overrated wideouts in a year of depth at that position; more help on the defensive line never materialized.

ATLANTA FALCONS

Immediate Help: Talk about going right to the heart of the problem. Coach Marion Campbell needed linebackers, so the first player picked in the draft was Auburn's Aundray Bruce, and the first player picked in the second round was USC's Marcus Cotton. Guess where they play? TE Alex Higdon is a gigantic (6'5", 245) athlete with the strength to block like a tackle.

Future Help: Look to Mike Haynes and George Thomas, wide receivers; Phillip Brown, a linebacker.

Mistakes: A quality running back who could spell Gerald Riggs wasn't found.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

Immediate Help: Nebraska defensive end Neil Smith—the second player chosen overall—is going to make the defense 25% better; safety Kevin Porter, picked up in the third round, might have gone in the first round given a few different circumstances; wideout J. R. Ambrose is a keeper.

Future Help: The Chiefs might have scored big with RB Kenny Gamble of Colgate and LB Troy Stedman of Washburn (Kan.) University.

Mistakes: More linebackers and a big tight end would have been nice; TE Alfredo Roberts of Miami is a long shot.

LOS ANGELES RAIDERS

Immediate Help: Al Davis was outsmarted, which is news in itself. He wanted OT David Cadigan and Heisman winner Tim Brown with his sixth and ninth picks in the first round, and could have had them had he taken Cadigan first. But he did get Brown and CB Terry McDaniel, who are more than good enough for a team that needed a ton of help.

Future Help: Lots. DT Tim Rother of Nebraska is a big, hard-working farmboy who will be a steady, unspectacular pro. Sleeper DE Edwin Grabisna of Case Western has speed and no reputation, but a lot of Gastineau-like qualities; FB Reggie Ware of Auburn may play right away.

Mistakes: DE Scott Davis of Illinois, the third of three No. 1 picks, is a boom or bust player and may be more of the latter than the former. DB Derrick Crudup of Oklahoma won't help much.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

Immediate Help: Both starting guards from Arizona State (first-round pick Randall McDaniel and fourth-rounder Todd Kalis) can play for the Vikings, McDaniel right now. NT Al Noga of Hawaii and SS Brad Edwards of South Carolina will fight for work.

Future Help: Kalis and Noga probably fit here, though they could surprise people and help in a hurry. Keep your eyes on Derrick White, the Oklahoma CB.

Mistakes: Not many, though CB Darrell Fullington of Miami, taken in the fifth round, is living on the team's reputation. A need for linebackers was left untouched.

PHOENIX CARDINALS

Immediate Help: No. 1 pick Ken Harvey, the 230-pound LB from Cal-Berkeley, better be of immediate help—he's the third first-round linebacker the team has picked in four years; Freddie Joe Nunn and Anthony Bell are the others, and neither has become a household name. But Phoenix is a new household for the Cardinals: maybe this time it'll work. Punter Tom Tupa should win the job without a contest, and he'll save coach Gene Stallings a roster spot because he'll be the third QB.

Future Help: CB Michael Brim is a genuine talent who needs work on a higher level of competition. But he'll probably be forced into instant action, which could hurt. RB Tony Jeffery of TCU should have been a No. 1 pick; what's wrong? Jon Phillips, the OG from Oklahoma, has great size and experience in a major program. So does Indiana WR Ernie Jones. SS Chris Carrier is 6'4", 215 pounds, and long-snaps, too.

Mistakes: Some will say Harvey, but let's not be too cruel too early. Not much help for a questionable defensive line.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Immediate Help: No. 1 pick John Stephens is a make-or-break risk. He has the size and speed but lacks consistency; still, he's the Pats' fullback as of now. Vincent Brown may have to fill in for the suddenly retired Don Blackmon at OLB or bolster the inside spots so someone else can.

Future Help: Big OT Tom Rehder of Notre Dame (6'6", 270) also played DL for the Irish. He's raw but physically gifted. Tim Goad, a NT from North Carolina, and Troy Wolkow, OG from Minnesota,

may become contributors for the Pats in a year or two.

Mistakes: Placekicker Teddy Garcia (fourth round) made only 56 of 88 career FGs, only six of 21 attempts from the 50 and out, only 14 of 24 from between the 40 and 49. WR Sammy Martin of LSU doesn't have much size or speed.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

Immediate Help: WR Brett Perriman from Miami may be able to crack the lineup with his speed and sure hands. Oklahoma running back Lydell Carr could help, if his injuries have disappeared. Brian Forde may be a catch—a 6'2", 225-pound OLB with great pursuit.

Future Help: Not much. Maybe Clemson NT Tony Stephens, a second-stringer behind Michael Dean Perry. Maybe hulking OT Glenn Derby of Wisconsin (6'7", 290).

Mistakes: Craig Heyward, the ballyhooed running back who skipped his senior season at Pitt, is

a risk unless his attitude about following rules and a diet undergoes a radical change. He's overweight, or will be soon, according to past performance, and once he's on his own and feeling confident, he seems to run into trouble. If he's sound, as a 250-pound (and no more) FB, he can help a lot, but he may be more trouble than he's worth, especially considering that the Saints burned a No. 1 pick on him. Some teams were so set against him they insisted they wouldn't have drafted him at all.

BUFFALO BILLS

Immediate Help: Without a first-round pick the Bills did reasonably well, taking a chance on Oklahoma St. RB Thurman Thomas (he has no cruciate ligament in his right knee) in the second round. If he's well, he's a star. WR Bernard Ford of tiny Central Florida can start for the Bills. Placekicker Kirk Roach (Western Carolina) may have been the most accurate of the kicking crop.

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Future Help: Keep your eyes on the grand experiment, the switch of Pitt LB Zeke Gadson to SS. He's not big enough to play linebacker in the NFL, but as a 215-220-pound safety, he could be a killer. He had 22.5 sacks in 1987.

Mistakes: The Bills may have the best young defense in the NFL, but their nose tackle, Fred Smerlas, is old and fading. There is no heir

apparent on the roster, and though the Bills drafted defensive linemen in the later rounds, they should have made a priority of getting a nose man.

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

Immediate Help: Predictably, the fleet wideouts were first on the priorities list, and the Chargers came up with Anthony Miller in the first and Quinn

Early in the third. Both could wind up as starters. DE Joe Campbell of New Mexico State could be a surprise contributor right away.

Future Help: OT Stacy Searels of Auburn is going to be moved to guard, where he could shine. OT David Richards of UCLA (6'5", 330) won't be moved to guard.

Mistakes: The Chargers needed defense and

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

THE TOP 10 CHOICES FROM THE SECOND half of the draft—rounds seven through 12—guaranteed to make the final roster.

1. Kenny Gamble, Chiefs RB, 5'10", 195 pounds, Colgate. What is there about Ivy League and near-Ivy League schools that brings out the snob in the NFL's decision makers? Rosters are sprinkled with those whose educational backgrounds have been exemplary rather than excused—safety Kenny Hill of the Giants, a Yale; former safety Gary Fencik of the Bears, a Yale; former punter Pat McInally of the Bengals, Harvard;

Crusaders. In his career, he gained 1,230 rushing yards, 2,012 receiving yards, added 146 tackles as a safety, four sacks, and 21 interceptions. He doesn't have the speed or size but somehow manages to get the job done. He also inspires those with more talent and less motivation to get moving or get waived. Gordy will be Chuck Noll's kind of guy—even though he was the 236th player drafted, in the ninth round.

3. Chris Carrier, Cardinals, DB/LB, 6'4", 215, LSU. . . . and besides that, he can do long snaps, too.

Carrier has a choice. He can put on 10 to 15 pounds and make it as a back-up linebacker, or he can work on his speed, take off a pound or two, and make it as a back-up strong safety. Either way, he has the heart for it, and there is that valuable ability to do the deep snaps. Of course, nobody wants a kid this light to be in there at center, but if the deep snapper is injured, you'd be amazed at how few players are capable of doing that little job.

Phoenix took Carrier in the 12th round, the 318th player to be drafted.

4. Kerry Goode, Buccaneers, RB, 5'10", 180, Alabama. You want some kind of confirmation? The man who recruited him for Alabama and coached him for three years is the same guy who drafted him—Tampa Bay head coach Ray Perkins.

"If Kerry is over his injury, he's as good as a first-round pick," said Perkins. "I know that young man, and I'm betting he can make it here."

Goode was a freshman phenom, then was cut down by knee problems. But as a seventh-round choice, the 167th overall player selected, he could be a major contributor to the rebuilding Bucs.

5. Garry Frank, Broncos, C/G, 6'2", 305, Mississippi St. Okay, so he's a little heavy. But this is a man-mountain in terms of strength, a kid who has played guard as well as center, who can handle the long snap, who plays tough and mean, and will not be intimidated.

Some teams had him ranked higher than where he was finally picked—in the seventh round, the 192nd player to be chosen, but Denver did the deed and may turn out to be the lucky one in the end.

6. Richard Romer, Bengals, LB, 6'3", 220, Union (N.Y.) College. Romer got no respect at all, something you might expect from a kid who played against the likes of Fairleigh Dickinson and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He's tough, has good lateral speed, and

can serve many teams as an inside 'backer in a 3-4 defense.

If you're a Bengal booster, get used to seeing this seventh-rounder (168th overall) on the roster.

7. Ralph Tamm, Jets, OL, 6'3", 275, West Chester (Pa.). Jets personnel director Mike Hickey likes this kid's all-out toughness. When told last season that an adversary from the previous year's schedule had vowed to "get even" in an upcoming game, Tamm shrugged, smiled, and inquired, ever so politely: "If I kill him on the field, will anybody know I did it?" If you're a team looking for a few good bone-crushers, this is a kid you've got to love. He's also incredibly strong. The Jets don't have many of those.

8. Jeff James, Lions, WR, 5'10", 180, Stanford. In this year of great abundance at the wide receiver position, it's not surprising that James was forgotten. But be sure that defensive backs won't soon forget him once he gets his act rolling at high speed for Detroit.

James possesses sufficient speed and great hands, and can be thought of as a cross between the burner and the possession receiver. He caught 42 passes for 516 yards last year; 154 for 2,265 yards and 16 TDs in his career. He's smart and tough. Allowing him to become the 169th player picked, a seventh-rounder, was a mistake.

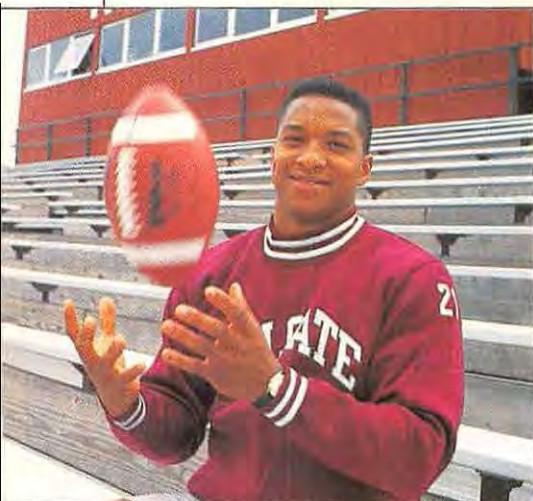
9. Jethro Franklin, Oilers, DT, 6'2", 260, Fresno St. Strangely, Franklin may have suffered on two counts—Fresno State isn't a well-known power, and what is known about the team mostly concerns its passing offense. But this is a tough, strong kid who will do something when the ball is snapped, something positive. He recorded 32.5 career sacks. In these days of 3-4 defenses and nose tackles who have enough quickness to move over and play tackle on a 4-3 "over-under" alignment, Jethro may just please Houston more than they can imagine.

In the 11th round, as the 298th player taken, he was a bargain.

10. Donnie Dee, Dolphins, LB/DE, 6'4", 240, Tulsa. Dee is a cross between a linebacker with a good pass rush but no dropback speed and a defensive end without enough size. On the other hand, so is Eric Kumerow, and Miami made him a first-round selection as a linebacker who will have to play defensive end. Dee is the same size and has many of the same characteristics. And he's a lot less expensive.

He'll have to improve his first-step quickness, and maybe he'll have to learn a few techniques, but this is an 11th-round choice—the 297th player taken—and as such the Indianapolis Colts shouldn't mind working with him. □

—D. K.



K.C.'s Gamble is a find.

linebacker Reggie Williams of the Bengals, Dartmouth. And more. Lots more.

So here's this perfectly delightful halfback with power and speed, a good blocker, and a capable receiver coming out of the backfield, a kid who gained 1,411 yards last season, 5,220 during his career, a kid who went to the same school as former Raider terror Mark van Eeghen, and what happens? He's allowed to slip to the 10th round, the 251st player overall.

He'll make the team.

2. Gordy Lockbaum, Steelers RB/SS, 5'10", 205, Holy Cross. Frank Merriwell lives. Albie Booth. Jack Armstrong. But unless the Steelers don't need a player who can run the ball, catch it, block people, then turn around and fill in on defense, as well as tear up a few divots on special teams, he'll make the team easy.

This is the kid who drew headlines because he was a two-way, 60-minute player for the



The Saints took a heavy risk selecting Pitt's 'Ironhead' Heyward.

went for offense. They needed a QB and got nothing—they must have figured that getting Mark Malone from Pittsburgh was enough.

GREEN BAY PACKERS

Immediate Help: If only wide receiver Sterling Sharpe had a quarterback who could reach him... well, that's been the Packer problem for a long time, but Sharpe is a Grade-A blue-chipper and he'll start. It is possible none of the other draft choices will be able to make that same claim.

Future Help: Shawn Patterson is a big, strong DT who needs some seasoning. Keith Woodside can run reasonably well, but why take a RB when so many other needs are so much more urgent?

Mistakes: The offensive line and the quarterback position got no help at all. And that's where new coach Lindy Infante needs the most help.

HOUSTON OILERS

Immediate Help: Lorenzo White will challenge Mike Rozier for the starting halfback position. Greg Montgomery, White's teammate at Michigan State, had better become the regular punter, since he cost a third-round pick.

Future Help: Quintin Jones of Pitt is going to be a CB in the league for a long time, but maybe not this season. LB Kurt Crain is a classic overachiever who needs a year. So, too, might linebacker David Spradlin of TCU.

Mistakes: There was a need for a big OT, but nothing happened. A back-up QB might have been a good idea.

Future Help: LB Jeff Herrod and LB-DE Donnie Dee—maybe.

Mistakes: Granted, there wasn't a pick until the third round, but QB Chris Chandler? No, not even when Gary Hogeboom and Jack Trudeau are one-two. Maybe the biggest mistake was the Colts' participation in the draft. All the picks should have been traded for a veteran quarterback.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

Immediate Help: DE Aaron Jones out of Eastern Kentucky is a soon-to-be clone of Richard Dent—if his back problems don't continue to hamper his progress. FB Warren Williams of Miami is another injury question. TE Mike Hinnant of Temple may be shifted to guard.

Future Help: WR Mark Zeno of Tulane was grand theft in the seventh round. Darrin Jordan of Northeastern is a strong OLB with a future.

Mistakes: How many big linemen do the Steelers need? The No. 2 pick was Kentucky guard Dermontti Dawson, the No. 3 was Notre Dame center Chuck Lanza. Where's the speedy halfback? Where's the sense of all this?

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

Immediate Help: DT Pierce Holt, taken in the second round (the 49ers traded their first-round pick to the Raiders for WR Dokie Williams), is going to be a factor; he's big, strong, and tough. LB Bill Romanowski is a bit slow and heavy-legged, but he'll play an inside position.

Future Help: Perhaps second-round pick Dan Stubbs of Miami can become the star he thinks he is, but it's going to take him a year to realize the difference between DE in college and in the NFL. His strong suit—rushing the passer—is what got him the 33rd spot in the draft at all.

Mistakes: Not going for a running back to help Roger Craig, and not paying attention to a secondary that needs some help.

MIAMI DOLPHINS

Immediate Help: CB Jarvis Williams from Florida St. will start.

Future Help: No. 1 pick Eric Kumerow, a LB at Ohio State, will be moved to DE. Deja vu? Kim Bokamper, in 1976, was a LB moved to DE. But lightning doesn't always strike the same place twice. OT Greg Johnson of Oklahoma is a 6'4", 315-pounder with 5.0 speed. FBs Mel Bratton (Miami) and George Cooper (Ohio State) can be of help.

Mistakes: Maybe Kumerow. TE Ferrell Edmunds of Maryland doesn't seem to take advantage of his great physical skills.

WASHINGTON REDSKINS

Immediate Help: Their first pick (second round) was a placekicker, Chip Lohmiller. He'd better be good, although it won't be too difficult to beat out Jess Atkinson and Ali Haji-Shiekh. Mike Oliphant is a return specialist from Puget Sound; he may have the electricity for a year or two.

Future Help: If RB Jamie Morris has his brother Joe's heart, he'll turn into a decent back. If Stan Humphries has the talent everybody thinks he has, he could be the eventual QB answer. DE Curt Koch of Colorado has a chance.

Mistakes: GM Bobby Beathard isn't a genius. This year's draft is a textbook example. ■

DENVER BRONCOS

Immediate Help: The problem that coach Dan Reeves said would be solved—too many small defensive linemen—was partially addressed with first-round pick NT Ted Gregory of Syracuse. He's 6'4", weighs 260 pounds, but it isn't enough. Kevin Guidry could win a place in the secondary, especially if CB Mark Haynes is cut.

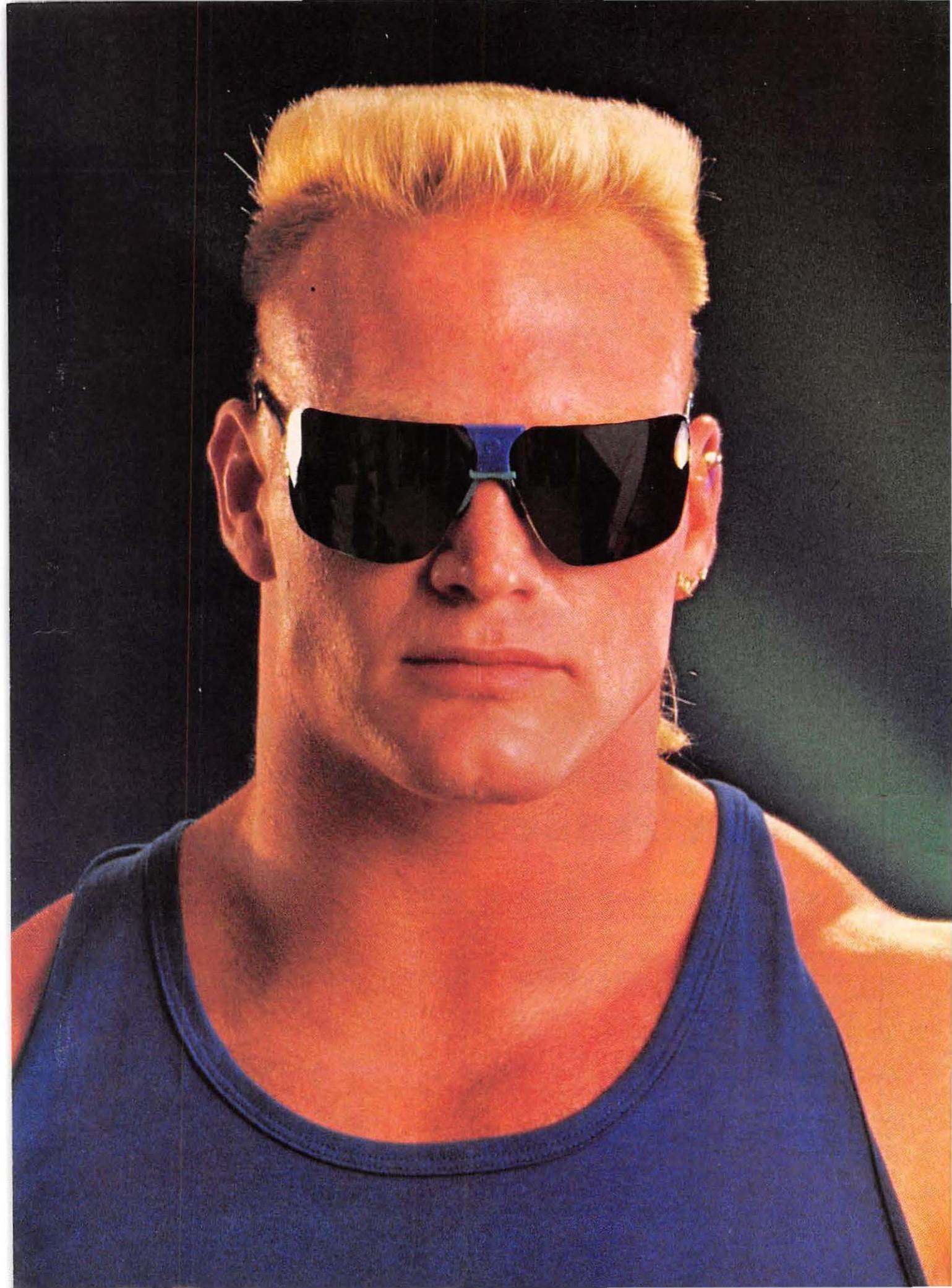
Future Help: OT Gerald Perry could be the pick of the litter. He's 6'5", 305 pounds, and filled with raw talent. OG-C Garry Frank (6'2", 305) is raw but promising.

Mistakes: Pat Kelly might be a nice TE, but don't the Broncos have Clarence Kay, Orson Mobley, and a few others? Not much help for a weak secondary.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

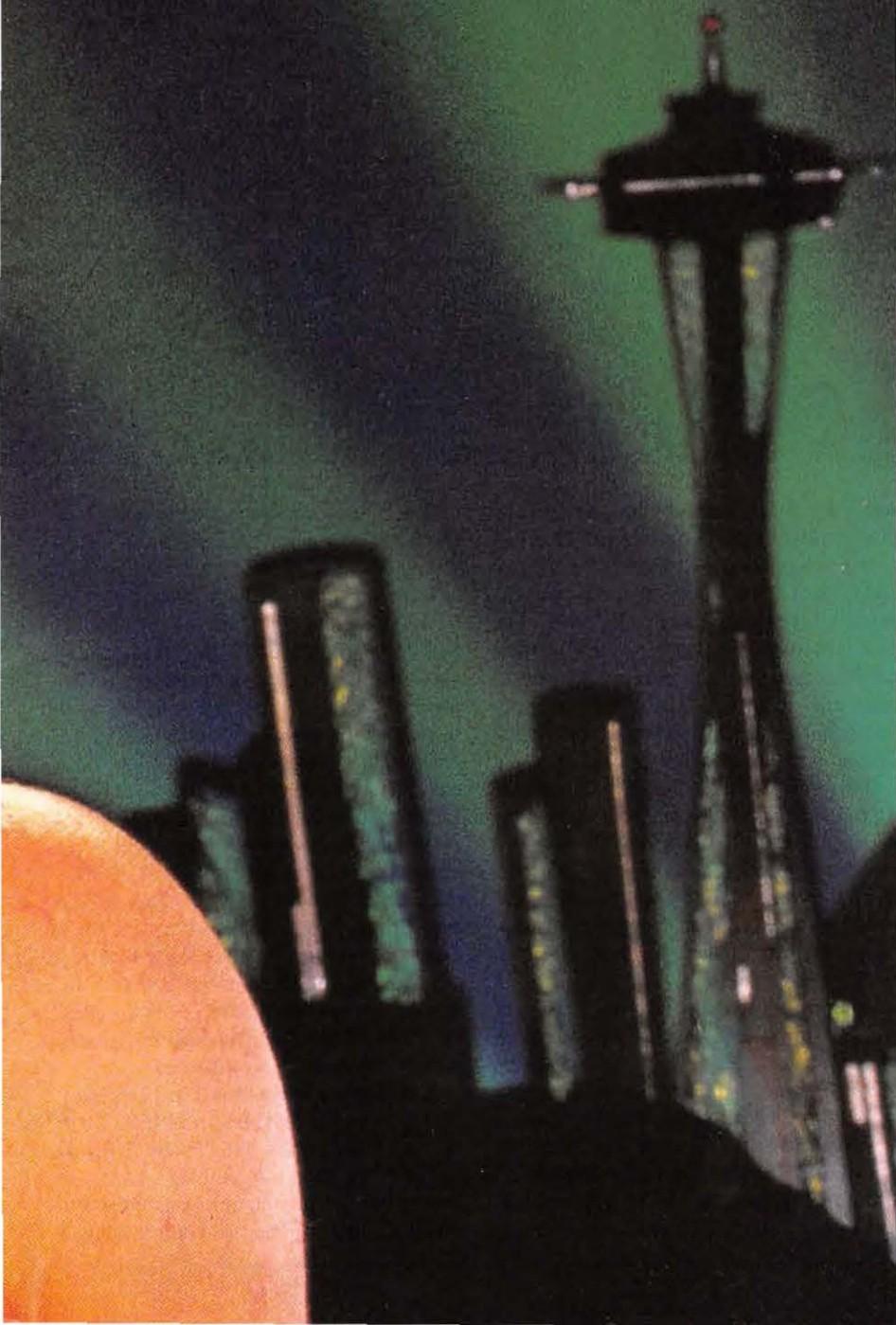
Immediate Help: CB Michael Ball may be able to wrest a starting job away from somebody.

Veteran football writer DAVE KLEIN is following up on his draft preview in our May issue—of the 27 players he tabbed for the first round, 20 got the nod.



*If you're tired of Brian Bosworth now,
just wait until 1995 rolls along*

MARKETING THE BOZ



By JOHN CLAYTON

THE DREAMER AND THE schemer formed their alliance at—of all places—Furr's Cafeteria in Norman, Okla.

Brian Bosworth, the Oklahoma Sooners' sophomore linebacker, who dreamed of being marketably different, sat with Gary Wichard, a former small-college quarterback turned lawyer. As he always did at Furr's, Bosworth grabbed the round booth in the corner. He walked over to the service table and poured a pitcher of ice tea.

Minutes into the conversation each knew this was going to be the beginning of a long-term partnership. Wichard countered every Bosworth dream with a scheme.

Had a tape recorder been planted, we would have heard the outline of a plan to leave college football early and enter the pros via his own draft. We would have heard the early legal arguments to challenge Commissioner Pete Rozelle in case the NFL decided to strip him of his prized No. 44, the number he wore on his Sooners uniform. By their second pitcher of ice tea, commercial and movie plans were touched upon. We would have known the impact The Boz would make on society, in say, 1995. We would have known which pro quarterbacks he wanted to threaten and intimidate.

"Everything that has happened to Brian has been orchestrated," said Wichard, the Wizard of Hype in the Land of Boz.

Gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson said it best: "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro." Weirdness sells. So Brian Bosworth, with the weird haircut and the outrageous statements, turned pro early. As he enters his second season with the Seattle Seahawks, more of the seeds planted in Furr's Cafeteria have blossomed.

Here's the latest. For one thing, The Boz doesn't like to do sports magazine interviews anymore. Nothing personal, Wichard says, but sports magazines are bad for his image. The Boz will do *Playboy*, however.

Read about him in his book this fall. See him in his Right Guard Sports Stick commercials for Gillette. Occasionally, catch a handful of Boz quotes in your local newspapers.

What Bosworth and Wichard envisioned three years ago was that this 243-pound linebacker with 4.4 speed could bridge the gap between sports and entertainment. Because of that, Wichard protects The Boz's controversial image.

"I've got to keep him above certain things," Wichard said. "That's why Brian does not come out and support jock-type products. We only do certain things. We don't have a sneaker deal like other athletes. I bet I've turned down about \$1 million worth

The Bears game was the turning point in Bosworth's season.

of endorsements and another half-million in personal appearances over the past year."

Gradually, the football image will fade into a Hollywood set, but Wichaeld and Bosworth don't plan to rush it. Their plans go something like this: Elvis dominated the '50s. The Beetles controlled the '60s. The Boz will grab the '90s.

His rookie season was Act II of the Bosworth-Wichaeld game plan. First, he had to get out of Oklahoma on his own terms. That was easy. Bosworth had the grades to graduate in four years and skip his final year of football eligibility [he redshirted as a freshman]. Coach Barry Switzer, whom he feuded with for years, wasn't going to stop him. Qualifying for a supplemental draft was the next step.

"One of the most interesting and exciting things is that we have had every base covered," Wichaeld said. "We made him have his own draft. It was called The Boz draft. It was a sweepstakes. The whole nation was involved. It was like a lottery, like some people were lining up in New York to buy lottery tickets."

Odds on the Seahawks winning Bosworth were 37 to 1. Slips of paper were placed in a hat. Teams with the worst records had more slips. Rozelle drew the Seahawks. The Boz game began.

In one year Bosworth managed to sign a staggering \$11 million contract, sued the NFL with hopes of regaining his No. 44 (NFL rules require linebackers to wear numbers in the 50s), infuriated several Seahawks veterans, threatened to harm Denver Broncos quarterback John Elway, sold more than 15,000 self-produced anti-Boz T-shirts to irate Broncos fans, picked an on-the-air fight with a local disc jockey and became a semi-regular on the station, angered the city of Seattle by saying he felt uncomfortable in the Northwest, experimented with at least 40 different Boz cuts, wrote a book that paid him a \$160,000 advance, and earned between \$1 million and \$2 million in endorsements.

Every base was covered but one: the NFL Players Association went on strike for 24 days. The strike did more to harm his relationship with his teammates than Bosworth and Wichaeld figured. Instead of working out with the team, Bosworth went on the "Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson and "Good Morning America." Teammates fumed. At one team meeting before the strike ended, Bosworth and defensive end Jacob Green almost came to blows.

Because he missed five weeks of training camp, Bosworth forgot many of the techniques taught to him by Seahawks coaches



while the strike lingered. He played tentatively until the final four games of the season.

"He was fighting a hard battle," defensive coordinator Tom Catlin said. "A lot was expected of him, and some players didn't like him. He's a different type of person and some didn't except that. I'm sure some tried to make it hard for him. If somebody comes in making \$11 million, and you're not making \$11 million, I'm sure it has an effect."

Such dissension was foreign to Bosworth. At Oklahoma he was a leader. Occasionally with the Seahawks last season the negative feelings slipped into newspapers. Defensive end Jeff Bryant hinted he was "a bad apple." Inside linebacker Freddie Young leveled a few blasts against Bosworth when asked to compare their abilities.

Around the league, Bosworth's list of enemies grew. Pittsburgh Steelers center Mike Webster called him "an idiot" after a game. Steelers guard Brian Blankenship ripped off a headband that dangled down to Bosworth's back and waved it along the sidelines as if he had acquired a scalp.

Outrageousness turned to pure frustration by early December. Bosworth was the

first to admit he wasn't playing great. At Oklahoma he enjoyed the freedom of being a strong-side inside linebacker, roaming from sideline to sideline doing what he does best—"knocking the hell out of people." Seattle coach Chuck Knox played him at weak inside linebacker and made him call the plays. Out of position and out of sorts because of the memory lapses caused by the strike, Bosworth played tentatively. Each step required him to think instead of react. Running backs slipped past him.

His most embarrassing moment came in a Monday night game against the L.A. Raiders when Bo Jackson ran over him in the middle of the field. After the game Jackson whispered to Bosworth not to change, that they are both players whom people love to hate. Bosworth's emotion spilled out in an interview with *Washington Post* reporter Michael Wilbon less than two weeks later.

"The three months that I've been here, they've been the most uncomfortable three months of my entire life," Bosworth told Wilbon. "So far, I've probably had zero amount of fun playing the game that I'm supposed to have the most fun playing. I

have asked myself why and I've asked close friends why. And there's really no answer."

A week later a dejected and quiet Bosworth lumbered into the shop of his hairdresser, Jerry Callahan. That week the Seahawks were to visit the Bears. Everything in his life seemed to be wrong. Things were so bad that the Seahawks said no to a Bosworth plan to shave big red Chicago Bears letters into the side of his Boz cut.

"Brian was in a bad mood," Callahan said. "Brian usually works well on negative responses, but he was moody all week. That was the week everybody hated him. For weeks he hadn't been playing to his expectations. He sat in the chair and didn't say a thing. Usually he'll make a suggestion what to put on the side of his cut. I wanted to do something different, so I put a spider web on one side and stripes on the other."

Against the Bears, a different Bosworth emerged. He stripped a football from the hands of Bears running back Neal Anderson, sparking a four-week surge in which he became a dominating pro inside linebacker. In a playoff loss to the Houston Oilers, he roamed the field making 17 tackles. Finally, he was comfortable in a Seahawks uniform.

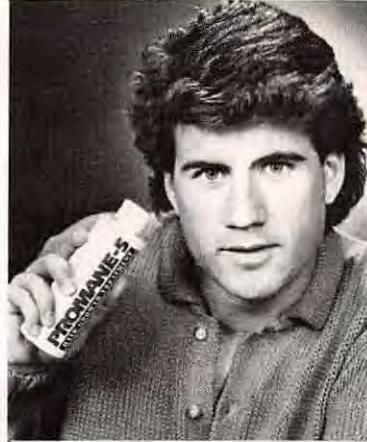
Knox likens him to a Joe Namath of the defense. Most people felt Bosworth would struggle through his first year. By his second year, though, those people predicted Bosworth would destroy offenses.

Nowhere was that more apparent than in the Broncos backfield. After two games against Bosworth, Elway refused to answer any question that included Bosworth's name. During last year's season opener, Bosworth hit Elway as he trotted out of bounds and growled at him. In their rematch Elway looked disturbed when Bosworth ran near him. Those flashes were more coming attractions for The Boz.

Slowly, he's patching some of the ill feelings with teammates caused by his first season. Greg Gaines, a seven-year veteran outside linebacker, announced publicly before training camp last year that Bosworth couldn't start. As the season progressed, they became best of friends.

But even in his worst moments The Boz has been marketable. Two weeks after his complaints to the *Washington Post*, a local T-shirt company called Extra Points printed an anti-Boz shirt. It showed a baby with a Boz Cut in diapers throwing a tearful temper tantrum. "Seattle's New Middle Whinebacker" was written across the front. More than 1,000 sold in a month. The shirts are still in popular demand.

What is it about Bosworth that inspires so much emotion? Kids 15 years old and younger idolize him. He is James Dean with a yellow flattop and colorful stripes along his temple. Bosworth's a rebel with a cause.



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"Kids like what Brian Bosworth stands for," Wichard said. "He stands for excellence. He stands for trying to do your own thing, but to try to accomplish it within the system. Brian's one of the best role models in the classroom, but he's not afraid to speak his inner feelings. He thinks you don't have to be a clone and go by what people think you're supposed to do."

During the strike the striking players held a practice. Kids at the junior high school hosting the practice gravitated toward Bosworth even though longtime heroes such as Ken Easley and Curt Warner were present.

N.W. Ayer, an advertising agency handling the Gillette account, sought Bosworth for that reason. The Boz projected an image they liked, but he was a figure who had not been overexposed. Wichard signed Bosworth to a reported three-year, \$1.6 million contract with Gillette that requires him to make only one commercial and maybe one appearance per year. So confident of Bosworth's appeal, N.W. Ayer debuted the commercial on the final episode of "Magnum, P.I.," which figured to draw high ratings.

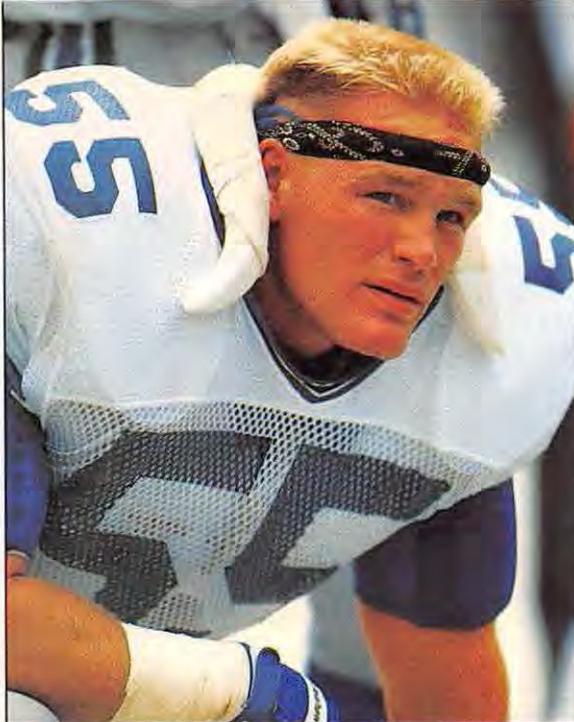
Wearing tux and tails, The Boz stalks a prep school classroom, lecturing on the fine art of napkin folding and personal hygiene from The Boz book of etiquette and suggesting his students use Right Guard Sports Stick. "Gentlemen, raise your glasses for civilization," Boz says, lifting his "44 Blues" sunglasses to a room filled with Boz clones.

"We didn't want to have a locker room scene," Wichard said. "We want to project the image that he is an intelligent guy, and the product is [associated] with the coolest guy around."

Like it or not, the image works. Before he had played a regular-season game, Bosworth shot a poster that would be one of the hottest selling in the country. "The Land of Boz" poster has sold about 400,000 copies, according to John Costacos of Seattle, whose company produced the poster.

"He's up there with Jim McMahon," Costacos said. "He's so marketable that kids just love him. Gary Wichard really knows what he's doing with Brian. He has an idea of how to market Brian. We put kids in the picture and called them Bozkins; we've sold a lot of Bozkin T-shirts, about 100,000. The great thing is that you either love him or hate him. You don't have a situation where 90% of the people don't give a damn."

The image does create hatred. Take Bosworth's contract, for example. Much of it is show. The \$11 million is spread over 10



Is he image or substance? Only The Boz and his agent, Gary Wichard, know for sure.

years. His \$2.5 million signing bonus won't be paid until 1997. His rookie salary was \$300,000. Gillette paid him more than that. NFL teams like to rate contracts based on present value, deflating the value for deferred compensations. The present value of Bosworth's contract is \$826,000 per year. Translated to normal terms over a five-year period, Bosworth's contract would equal a five-year, \$4.13 million deal.

Was the \$11 million signed for impact?

"That's 100% right," Seahawks president Mike McCormack said. "What he wanted initially was \$15 million. A lot of people in the league have come up to me and said, 'Mike, you signed him to one heck of a deal!'"

Wichard and Bosworth got what they sought—a deal that grabbed headlines and made the impression he was a million-dollar player when, in fact, he wasn't.

Wichard attended an Oklahoma football game when Bosworth was a sophomore. Wichard said, "To me, the Bosworth relationship [with the fans] was something that was meant to be. I watched the game and I noticed that he had a charisma. I compared him to a Broadway performer. I felt then that he could bridge the gap between sports and entertainment. At 23, he's already there."

Soon after that game Wichard and Bosworth got to know and like each other. At times Wichard, a former C.W. Post quarterback who was drafted by the New York Jets, wondered why.

"If my daughter said she was going out with this football player who wore his hair like he does, I might feel a little uneasy," Wichard said. "Once you get to know him, you understand. He speaks his mind, and he's not a hypocrite."

About the only hypocritical thing about Bosworth is that he doesn't live life as his fast-lane image indicates. A self-confessed couch potato who prefers watching rented movies instead of patrolling the city at nights, Bosworth thrives on his privacy.

Hours before a home game against the Denver Broncos, Bosworth visited Callahan's shop for a Boz cut that takes between two and three hours. Seattle Christmas shoppers were amazed when they stared into Callahan's window and watched The Boz sitting in a chair with chemical dye in his hair.

"There were about 200 people outside looking in," Callahan said. "He didn't say anything, but you could tell that he didn't like being seen by all those people."

Even his endorsements don't consume much of his time. Gargoyles, a company that sells designer sunglasses, has asked Bosworth to appear in only one posed shot for their "44 Blues" ad campaign.

Yet, Bosworth and Wichard know how to work the system for impact. John Posey, a morning disc jockey at Seattle radio station KZOK, began an anti-Boz campaign.

"I said he was a 22-year-old punk talking like a big man," Posey said. "I started an all-out war on Bosworth."

Bosworth called the station and started a 10-minute screaming session with Posey on the air, calling him a '60s burnout. Eventually, they worked out an agreement where Bosworth would give up \$44 to Children's Hospital if he didn't make four tackles in a game. Posey would make a donation if he made more than four tackles.

Ben Kalin, marketing director at rival KXRX radio, claims that the Posey tirade was scripted and that Bosworth became a salaried employee of the station.

"Not true," Posey said. "That station tries to copy everything we do anyway."

Behind the scenes, Bosworth and Wichard laugh. Having radio stations feud with each other over the \$11 million linebacker was what they planned. And only they know what devilish plans are ahead.

"Brian Bosworth is a business," Wichard said. "We try to do some extraordinary wheeling and dealing, but we are very conscious of Brian's business attraction. We both know where we're going."

Had we only eavesdropped on that long conversation at Furr's . . . ■

JOHN CLAYTON spent a decade covering the Steelers before moving to Seattle. After dealing with zanies Jack Lambert and Terry Bradshaw, even The Boz seems tame.

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in the social graces:
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By SHELDON SUNNESS

IT WAS THE HOTTEST ISSUE OF A brutally hot summer. All across the country people argued over the shocking events. Even in Washington, D.C., powerful people wondered aloud whether it was possible that nobody really knew what was going on.

Hearings were held. But they did little to clear the air. Oliver North shed no light on

the matter; neither did Fawn Hall. When it was all over, the investigators claimed that nothing unusual had occurred. And that only made the skeptics howl louder.

Now a year has passed and we're still not certain about the truth: why were there so many home runs being hit in 1987?

Clearly, something was going on. Home plate became a launching pad in 1987 when a record 4,458 home runs were smashed—some 645, or nearly 17%, more than the previous high, which was set the preceding

year. Seven teams set all-time homer marks, and five teams broke the 200 home run barrier—with another half-dozen clubs clouting 192 or more.

In one sense, 1987 wasn't unique statistically. Home run production had seen major gains before. In the 1969 season it jumped 30%. In 1973 it rose 22%. In 1977 it shot up 51%. But in each of those years one or two reasons for the rise were obvious. In 1969 the batters had an edge because expansion had diluted the pitching talent and because

REMEMBER THE HRs OF '87?

There's never been, and probably never will be, an awesome show of power such as witnessed last year



the pitcher's mound had been lowered five inches. In 1973 the institution of the designated hitter rule brought about a rise in AL homers. In 1977 the addition of two more AL teams, Toronto and Seattle, spread the pitching talent thin once again. But in 1987 there was no expansion and no sudden rule change that could account for the dramatic rise in home run production.

The increase in homers in '87 also bucked a long-standing trend. The '87 season marked the third straight year that home run production per team had increased. Such an increase hadn't occurred in three successive seasons since 1936 to '38.

Forget about the numbers, though. Everywhere you looked last year something, or someone, was exploding. There was the Born-Again-Bomber syndrome, in which part-time players like Howard Johnson went from zeros to heroes, almost overnight. And the Rise of the Mighty Mites, such as infielders Luis Aguayo and Donnie Hill, who were suddenly and inexplicably blasting homers. And there was the puzzling way the ball seemed to jump off the bat and dart for the fences.

The season was offensive, in many more ways than one.

Something happened—or did it?

Although many claimed that not even the Playboy mansion had as many rabbits running loose, the baseball establishment ran a series of tests which proved (or claimed to prove) that the ball was no different from previous seasons.

Could they be right? If so, what could possibly explain last year's home run derby? Consider the following theories:

1) Year of the Slugger

Mark McGwire. Eric Davis. Jose Canseco. Wally Joyner. Some baseball watchers have credited (or blamed) the extra gopher balls on a great new generation of slugging stars. Last season was the Year of the Slugger, they said.

Nonsense. There is simply no way a handful of hitters, however talented, could account for six hundred *extra* home runs. In the first place, the arrival of these players, as often as not, permitted teams to replace older—and more expensive—sluggers. Thus, McGwire's appearance allowed the A's to retire Dave Kingman, who annually crashed 35 to 40 homers.

Besides, many of these new stars had already posted solid stats in 1986. Joyner and Canseco combined produced only 10 more homers than the previous year.

Focusing on the feats of a handful of players proves nothing. The same logic could lead to the conclusion that 1987 was the Year of the Slump. After all, consider that Jesse Barfield's home run output shriveled from a league-leading 40 to 28, Don Baylor's from 31 to 16, Doug DeCinces' from 26 to 16, Jim



HoJo's HR total jumped from 10 to 36. Bat, ball, or biceps?

Morrison's from 23 to 13, and Lance Parrish's from 22 to 17 despite having 140 more at-bats in '87.

More than 100 hitters registered their personal best homer totals last year. There are many possible explanations for that—the Year of the Slugger isn't one of them.

2) Power Lifting

Hitters are stronger these days, thanks in large measure to the gains made in the weight room. Pumping iron, so this argument goes, has turned long fly balls into home runs.

Hitters are certainly stronger. So are all athletes (including pitchers). Strength training has been a legitimate part of a ballplayer's regimen for about a decade now. Probably no one did more to bring the weight room into the clubhouse than Angels' outfielder Brian Downing. With a single monstrous offseason program in the late '70s, he made himself into a serious slugger, converting "warning track power" into home runs.

With more players including such training in their workouts, a slight increase in home run totals might be expected—but nothing like the jolt that took place last season. The winter before the '87 season witnessed no mass movement to weight training.

3) The Right Stuffing

Some observers felt all the booming bats were largely the result of an inside job—specifically, stuffing the bat with cork or nails. Some felt as many as 25% of all hitters were guilty of corking.

"No way it's that high," says Giants manager Roger Craig, who puts the figure at about 5%.

That's probably correct, which eliminates the effects of stuffing from the list of suspects. Besides, no serious sluggers were caught last season; and the lone guilty culprit, Houston's Billy Hatcher, slammed a very quiet 11 homers last year.

The concern over corking swirled around the Mets' overnight slugging sensation, Howard Johnson, as skeptics spent a valiant summer searching for a "smoking bat." They never found it.

But how could Johnson's homer output have zoomed from 10 to 36?

The answer may not be all that difficult. HoJo did hit three and a half times more homers—but he also batted two and a half times more than he did in 1986. And he enjoyed the obvious advantages that come with playing every day. Johnson credits much of his improvement to "maturity at the plate." Translation: patience, greater selectivity, etc.

"He's always had the potential; he's very strong," says Roger Craig, who knew Johnson when both were with the Detroit Tigers. "It doesn't surprise me at all."

4) The Pitching Glitch

"Too many fat pitches," is how Tim McCarver explains the homer explosion.

They can point to some disturbing numbers. The 1987 season began with no less than one-third of all major league

Would McGwire have hit 49 HRs in a 'normal' rookie season?

pitchers having two years or less of big-league experience.

Expansion is blamed for the decline in pitching. It's always difficult to absorb new teams in the best of circumstances, and it has been particularly hard over the last two decades as the rise of college sports has drained off even more talent, especially, many would argue, when it comes to pitching.

But if expansion dilutes pitching, it should also be expected to take its toll on hitting. For example, one of expansion's effects in recent years has been a graying of the game, the appearance of a number of older players. But for every Tommy John, not too far from the bat rack lurks a Jose Cruz.

At the same time it's obvious that many pitchers are inexperienced. In many places, pitching has become on-the-job training. Pitchers are showing limited control, a tendency to fall behind on the count, a tendency to rely on the fastball in tight situations, and an even more distressing tendency to groove the hard stuff (in those situations) instead of working the corners.

The results: too many fat pitches.

Pitching is in a troubled state. It's made more troubled by . . .

5) The Dis-Arming of Baseball

Lowering the mound, eliminating inside pitching, and creating the "postage stamp" strike zone (the term of Red Sox pitching coach Bill Fischer) have all shifted the advantage from pitchers to hitters.



Reducing the pitcher's mound from 15" to 10", which was done in 1969, takes several miles off a hurler's velocity. Prohibiting pitchers from throwing inside, begun in the early '80s, gives hitters much greater cover-

age of home plate, particularly the outside corner. (In the famous Ted Williams' diagram, the worst pitches to swing at are down on the outside corner. Now those are regularly slammed the other way for opposite field home runs, due partly to stronger and smarter hitters, but largely to hamstrung pitchers.) And the shrinking strike zone has made it easier for hitters to sit back and wait for their pitch.

Yet these are only small elements of a deeper—and, to baseball purists, disturbing—trend . . .

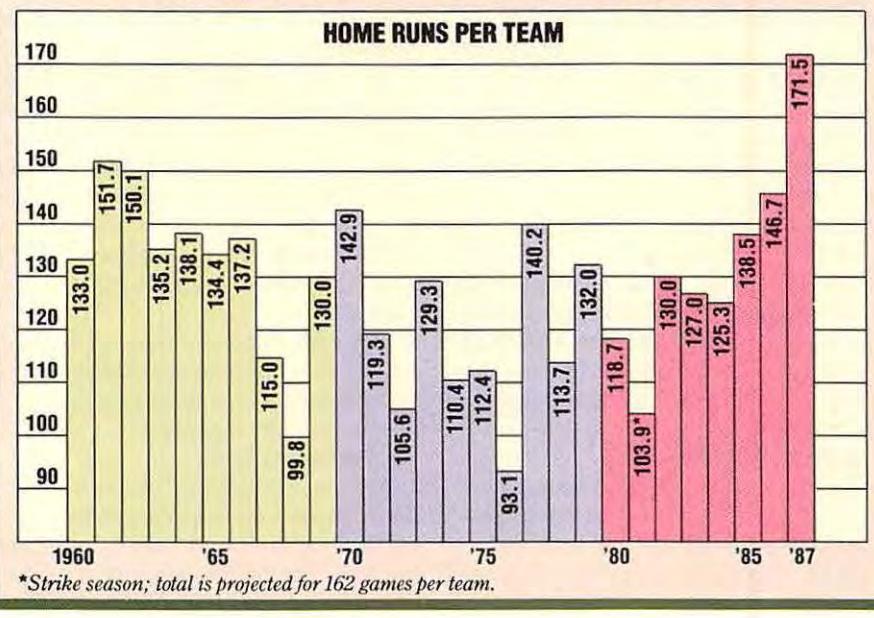
6) The Jazzing of the Game

Beginning in the early '70s, the major leagues began a concerted effort to inject a heavy dose of offense into the game. The drive to put more spark in the park was not exactly meddling with the forces of nature—but it came awfully close. It started with the controversial appearance of the designated hitter in 1973. (The effects of the DH have been well documented: a couple of seasons back it was shown that the DH adds more than half a run per game per team, along with more wear and tear on the pitching.)

Next, in the mid-'70s, the fences were moved in at several parks. So by 1977 home run totals soared dramatically. Several factors had come together to produce the surge: the last round of expansion; a juiced up baseball, as Rawlings replaced Spalding

DIAGRAMMING THE DINGERS

Charting home runs per team, rather than simply measuring the raw totals, makes it easier to see the fluctuations in home run totals irrespective of the increasing number of teams in the majors. In '87, for the first time, a dramatic rise occurred following two prior increases.



as the official major league ball; and the closer fences.

In 1977 the two pennant winners, the Yankees and the Dodgers, had both previously played in ballparks known for their impenetrable, death-valley outfields. Shortening the power alleys in Yankee Stadium helped New York homers climb over 50% that year. The Dodgers had moved their fences in several years earlier—they simply forgot to provide enough players who could reach them. They took care of that in 1977—and homers more than doubled over the previous year, rocketing from 91 to 191.

A number of other changes in stadium construction have exerted significant effects on long-ball hitting. Much has been written about the domed stadiums where the balls carry well and where the hitter is often the beneficiary of a jet stream, such as the right field alley in Minneapolis' Homerdom. More recently, alterations in the Montreal and Baltimore ballparks have attracted attention for their contributions to the home run surge.

The Orioles had never hit more than 181 HRs in a single season before the addition of a large scoreboard in 1985. They've hit more than 200 in two of the last three years. The reason: the scoreboard cuts down incoming wind gusts that would otherwise keep many long flyballs in the park.

7) Weather or Not

"Last spring was unusually warm," says Tom House, Texas Rangers pitching coach. "Check those months and you'll find that's when most of those [extra] homers were hit."

The idea is that hitters were looser and the ball carried better in the surprisingly warm spring air.

House is right—sort of. Home run totals declined during the second half of the season, particularly in the stretch run. They reached their highest point in May (27% increase over the previous May), and were almost as high in June (up 23%). But the numbers didn't stop there: they also were up 23% in July.

A number of players believed that the weather influenced the higher homer output. The problem with the data, however, is that can also be used to support Red Sox pitching coach Bill Fischer's theory that the baseballs were juiced up during the first half of the season, then restored to normal after the All-Star game.

"Somebody somewhere wanted to perk the game up," Fischer says. "But it got out of hand. At the rate they were going in the first half, a lot of guys would have wound up in the 50s. Guys that were only about 160 pounds were hitting the seats. They didn't need to cork their bats."

Which brings us back to the ball itself.

8) The Ball after All?

Concerned by all the controversy, both the major leagues and the Rawlings Sporting Goods Co. conducted independent tests on the ball. There was a compression test and a rebound, or coefficient of restitution test, in which baseballs were shot from an air cannon against a wall of white ash, the material from which bats are made. In all cases the 1987 baseball was behaving quite normally.

But not everyone was so easily satisfied. Dr. Joel Hollenberg, professor of engineering at New York's Cooper Union school of engineering, repeated a series of experiments he had conducted several years earlier and came up with different results.

This ball was different, Dr. Hollenberg concluded. He said the balls had a "different stitch roughness." The stitches, he said, were higher, creating a greater turbulent flow around the baseball that would lessen the drag caused by low stitches and allow the ball to travel further.

Rawlings denies last year's stitches were any different.

9) The Eyes Have It

Along with Hollenberg's laboratory data, consider the observation of some of the game's well-respected participants.

"The ball has been pumped up all year,"

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Want To Shoot An Eagle or Two?

By Mike Henson

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If you would like an eagle or two, here's your best chance yet. Write your name and address and "Code Name S" (the ball's R&D name) on a piece of paper and send it along with a check (or your credit card number and expiration date) to National Golf Center (Dept. H-834), 500 S. Broad St., Meriden, CT 06450. Or phone 203-238-2712, 8-8 Eastern time. No P.O. boxes, all shipments are UPS. One dozen "S" balls cost \$21.95 (plus \$1.95 shipping), two to five dozen are only \$19.50 each, six dozen are only \$99.00. You save \$43.00 ordering six. Shipping is free on two or more dozen. Specify white or Hi-Vision yellow.

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Mets' pitching coach Mel Stottlemyre said at the end of the season. "I've had baseballs that have been used every year for years and this baseball is definitely different."

He cites his experiences at batting practice: "The balls stay much harder, [there are] no torn covers or soft spots after being beaten around for two or three days of batting practice. To me that's enough proof and I'd argue with whatever kinds of tests [that claim otherwise]."

"The ball is different, it's livelier, something's in it," Roger Craig says. "I see balls that are just singles going over the fence, check swings going over three hundred feet. Something is going on . . ."

10) The Chinese Menu Theory

(Or, One from Column A . . .)

So, where does all this leave us? Tired and confused, undoubtedly. Beyond that, however, it is reasonable to conclude that a number of factors contributed to last year's home run outburst, the most prolific in baseball history. The ball itself has to be considered the major culprit: there is simply too much evidence to think otherwise. The weather also played a role. So, to a lesser extent, did the accumulation of several long-range trends.

One thing is certain. The record-breaking home run totals of 1987 will be difficult, if not impossible, to repeat in the near future. Those kinds of numbers are already all but out of reach for this season, with home run productivity running about 20% behind last year's through the early months of the season. "Everything's back to normal now," Fischer said in early May. "This year the ball is the same one they used in the second half of the season last year, and the guys hitting the home runs are the guys that are supposed to be hitting them. You won't be seeing that many home runs again unless they go back to the ball they used in the first half of the season last year. Nobody will ever know the whole story of what happened last season, except the people who made the ball."

11) Last Licks

If you are still unsatisfied, consider Bob Ojeda's "two shift" theory. The Mets pitcher believes that workers at the plant where the balls are manufactured work in two shifts: the first group likes pitchers; the second, which doesn't like pitchers, winds the ball tighter.

Finally, if you still remain unconvinced, just remember that baseballs are manufactured in Haiti—the voodoo capital of the world. And let it go at that. ■

Free-lance writer SHELDON SUNNESS has performed a writing explosion of sorts, penning several pieces for I.S., including a story on the NBA's three-point shot.

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NUMBERS

BY AIR OR BY LAND

The 1987 New York Giants scored 26 of their 32 touchdowns through the air, an .813 percentage. That was the highest percentage of passing TDs scored by a team last season. Listed below are the five teams, in two separate categories, that scored the highest percentage of their touchdowns by passing or running.

Passing Touchdowns			
Rank	Team	TDs	Passing Total Pct.
1.	New York Giants	.26	.32 .813
2.	San Francisco 49ers	.44	.59 .746
3.	Atlanta Falcons	.17	.24 .708
4.	Seattle Seahawks	.31	.46 .674
5.	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	.22	.33 .667

Rushing Touchdowns			
Rank	Team	Rushing TDs	Total Pct.
1.	Minnesota Vikings	.20	.42 .476
2.	Green Bay Packers	.13	.28 .464
3.	Indianapolis Colts	.14	.31 .452
4.	Dallas Cowboys	.17	.38 .447
5.	New York Jets	.17	.39 .436

By Anthony A. Rau

TEAMS OF THE '80s

The San Francisco 49ers and the Miami Dolphins have put together the NFL's best records during this decade. Both teams are 80-39-1 (.671 winning percentage) heading into the 1988 season. The Washington Redskins—the only team other than the 49ers to win two Super Bowls in the '80s—are a close third with an 80-40 record (.667). Listed below are the won-lost records of each NFL team during the 1980s.

American Football Conference						National Football Conference					
Rank	Team	W	L	T	Pct.	Rank	Team	W	L	T	Pct.
1.	Miami Dolphins	.80	.39	1	.671	1.	San Francisco 49ers	.80	.39	1	.671
2.	Denver Broncos	.74	.45	1	.621	2.	Washington Redskins	.80	.40	0	.667
3.	Los Angeles Raiders	.74	.46	0	.617	3.	Dallas Cowboys	.75	.45	0	.625
4.	Cleveland Browns	.64	.56	0	.533	4.	Chicago Bears	.74	.46	0	.617
	New England Patriots	.64	.56	0	.533	5.	Los Angeles Rams	.65	.55	0	.542
	Pittsburgh Steelers	.63	.57	0	.525	6.	New York Giants	.59	.60	1	.496
	Seattle Seahawks	.62	.58	0	.517	7.	Minnesota Vikings	.56	.64	0	.467
	New York Jets	.61	.58	1	.513		Philadelphia Eagles	.55	.63	2	.467
	Cincinnati Bengals	.61	.59	0	.508	9.	Green Bay Packers	.51	.66	3	.438
	San Diego Chargers	.60	.60	0	.500	10.	Phoenix Cardinals	.50	.68	2	.425
	Kansas City Chiefs	.54	.66	0	.450	11.	Detroit Lions	.50	.69	1	.421
	Buffalo Bills	.48	.72	0	.400	12.	Atlanta Falcons	.49	.70	1	.413
	Houston Oilers	.43	.77	0	.358	13.	New Orleans Saints	.48	.72	0	.400
	Indianapolis Colts	.37	.82	1	.313	14.	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	.35	.84	1	.296

By Anthony A. Rau

RELIABLE RECEIVERS

San Francisco 49ers teammates Roger Craig and Jerry Rice have been the NFL's leading receivers over the past three years (1985 to '87): Craig has the most receptions (239) over that time, while Rice has gained the most receiving yardage (3,575 yards). Listed below are the players with the most receptions and the most receiving yardage over the past three seasons.

Receptions				
Rank	Player, Team	1985	1986	1987 Total
1.	Roger Craig, 49ers	.92	.81	.66 239
2.	Todd Christensen, Raiders	.82	.95	.47 224
3.	J. T. Smith, Cardinals	.43	.80	.91 214
4.	Steve Largent, Seahawks	.79	.70	.58 207
5.	Gary Clark, Redskins	.72	.74	.56 202
	Art Monk, Redskins	.91	.73	.38 202
7.	Jerry Rice, 49ers	.49	.86	.65 200
8.	Al Toon, Jets	.46	.85	.68 199

Receiving Yardage				
Rank	Player, Team	1985	1986	1987 Total
1.	Jerry Rice, 49ers	.927	1,570	1,078 3,575
2.	Drew Hill, Oilers	1,169	1,112	989 3,270
3.	Steve Largent, Seahawks	1,287	1,070	912 3,269
4.	Gary Clark, Redskins	1,926	1,265	1,066 3,257
5.	Mike Quick, Eagles	1,247	939	790 2,976
6.	Stanley Morgan, Patriots	.760	1,491	672 2,923
7.	Mark Clayton, Dolphins	.996	1,150	776 2,922
8.	James Lofton, Raiders	1,153	840	880 2,873

By Mark E. Van Overloop

RAGING RUNNERS

Since entering the NFL in 1983, Eric Dickerson has rushed for an amazing 8,256 yards. His performance over the past five years has been far superior to that of any other running back. Listed below are the 20 running backs who have gained the most rushing yards in the past five years. (Player's 1987 team is listed.)

Rank	Player, Team	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	Total
1.	Eric Dickerson, Colts	1,808	2,105	1,234	1,821	1,288	8,256
2.	Walter Payton, Bears	1,421	1,684	1,551	1,333	533	6,522
3.	Gerald Riggs, Falcons	.437	1,486	1,719	1,327	875	5,844
4.	Marcus Allen, Raiders	1,014	1,168	1,759	759	754	5,454
5.	Curt Warner, Seahawks	1,449	40	1,094	1,481	985	5,049
6.	Tony Dorsett, Cowboys	1,321	1,189	1,307	748	456	5,021
7.	George Rogers, Redskins	1,144	914	1,093	1,203	613	4,967
8.	James Wilder, Buccaneers	.640	1,544	1,300	704	488	4,676
9.	Freeman McNeil, Jets	.654	1,070	1,331	856	530	4,441
10.	Joe Morris, Giants	.145	510	1,336	1,516	658	4,165
11.	Sammy Winder, Broncos	.757	1,153	715	789	741	4,155
12.	Roger Craig, 49ers	.725	649	1,050	830	815	4,069
13.	Earnest Jackson, Steelers	.39	1,179	1,028	910	696	3,852
14.	Stump Mitchell, Cardinals	.373	434	1,006	800	781	3,394
15.	Darrin Nelson, Vikings	.642	406	893	793	642	3,376
16.	Walter Abercrombie, Steelers	446	610	851	877	459	3,243
17.	James Brooks, Bengals	.516	396	929	1,087	290	3,218
18.	O.J. Anderson, Giants	1,270	1,174	481	237	6	3,168
19.	Tony Collins, Patriots	1,049	550	657	412	474	3,142
20.	Wendell Tyler, 49ers	.856	1,262	867	127	—	3,112

By Mark E. Van Overloop

RUNNING AWAY WITH IT

Over the past 55 seasons, the NFL rushing title has been won by an average of 211 yards per season. The size of the margins has ranged from 859 yards down to one yard. Listed below are the 10 largest margins between the first- and second-place rushing leaders since 1933. Totals for American Football League runners from 1960-69 are not taken into account in the rankings.

Year	Winner, Team	Yards	Runner-Up, Team	Yards	Margin
1973	O.J. Simpson, Bills	2,003	John Brockington, Packers	1,144	859
1963	Jim Brown, Browns	1,863	Jim Taylor, Packers	1,018	845
1958	Jim Brown, Browns	1,527	Alan Ameche, Colts	.791	736
1965	Jim Brown, Browns	1,544	Gale Sayers, Bears	.867	677
1977	Walter Payton, Bears	1,852	Mark van Eeghen, Raiders	1,273	579
1975	O.J. Simpson, Bills	1,817	Franco Harris, Steelers	1,246	571
1980	Earl Campbell, Oilers	1,934	Walter Payton, Bears	1,460	474
1984	Eric Dickerson, Rams	2,105	Walter Payton, Bears	1,684	421
1954	Joe Perry, 49ers	1,049	John Henry Johnson, 49ers	.681	368
1947	Steve Van Buren, Eagles	1,008	Johnny Clement, Steelers	.670	338

By John Grabowski

TOUCHDOWN BOUND

Jerry Rice, despite playing in only 12 games, set an NFL record last season with 22 touchdown receptions. Not surprisingly, Rice had the best scoring percentage among receivers in '87, scoring on 22 of his 65 receptions (33.8%). Listed below are the eight receivers with the best scoring percentages in the NFL last season. (Minimum: 20 receptions.)

Rank	Player, Team	TDs	Rec.	Pct.
1.	Jerry Rice, 49ers	22	65	.338
2.	Mark Duper, Dolphins	8	33	.242
3.	Mike Quick, Eagles	11	46	.239
4.	Dokie Williams, Raiders	5	21	.238
5.	Dwight Clark, 49ers	5	24	.208
6.	Willie Gault, Bears	7	35	.200
7.	Lionel Manuel, Giants	6	30	.200
8.	Anthony Carter, Vikings	7	38	.184

By Mark E. Van Overloop

THE GOOD DOCTOR

James Brown, the CBS sportscaster—where did he work before joining the network? His name seems familiar.

S.M., WAYNESBORO, GA.

After an outstanding career with the Cleveland Browns, Brown moved on to become a popular soul singer, before joining CBS-TV's college basketball crew. He recently recorded his first album in 10 years, which included hits such as: "Packer's Got a Brand New Bag," "I Got the Feeling (It's Time for a Timeout)," and "Musburger Popcorn."

Sandy Lyle sure did make a great shot from that bunker on the 18th fairway to set up his winning putt at the Masters. Did you know he could do that?

B.O., ST. ANDREWS, S.C.

Hey, his nickname isn't Roughy Lyle or Watery Lyle.

Happy Chandler made some remark that got all of the football players at the University of Kentucky hot and bothered. Do you know what it was?

D.U., HANOVER, N.H.

Not really. I think he said something about all of the Zambonis being black, but I didn't even know Kentucky had a hockey team.

Dave Winfield's books caused a big fuss in New York. What didn't George Steinbrenner like about it?

R.J., HOMER CITY, PENN.

First of all, there weren't enough pictures. George likes pictures. Second, the letters were too small. Third, it was reported that Steinbrenner owes the Winfield Foundation over \$10. Fourth, Winfield reported that Don Mattingly was white, Willie Randolph was black, and that to be a true New York Yankee, you ought to be striped.

Steinbrenner called Winfield a liar, threatened to trade him to Baltimore for Fred Lynn or to Oakland for Mark McGwire's shoes, and ordered Winfield benched if his batting average dropped into triple figures.

Tell me something about this ballet in which Herschel Walker performed during the offseason. Which one was it?

M.B., FOOTVILLE, WIS.

Lynn Swann Lake.

Why are the Los Angeles Kings of the National Hockey League changing their uniform colors from purple and gold to black and silver?

A.D., SANTA ROSA, CALIF.

The Kings don't want to be linked any more with a powerful team like the Lakers. They'd rather be linked with a pussycat team like the Raiders.

Cal Ripken Sr. got fired so quickly as manager of the Baltimore Orioles. How come?

A.J., CAMDEN, N.J.

He ran out of sons.

Mike Tyson's wife, I hear, is a pretty good actress. True or false?

A.B., KALAMAZOO, MICH.

True. In fact, she'll be starring in the new made-for-TV movie, "The King Family," in which she will portray Mrs. Don King. Studio prop people are busy right now working on the hair. By the way, Mike Tyson, is a pretty good actor, too. Every time he gets hit, he acts like it hurts.

Larry Brown sure did keep everybody guessing about that UCLA basketball job before settling at Kansas. Why did he change his mind at the last minute?

L.K., MANHATTAN, KAN.

Larry was upset at UCLA's decision not to sign him to a \$1.5 million, three-day contract.

During the last television season, I never found out "Slap" Maxwell's real first name. What was it?

J.S., SHERMAN OAKS, CALIF.

Cornbread.

Ofall the basketball shoes currently on the market, can you tell me which ones are the worst?

I.T., THOMASTON, CONN.

Air Laimbeers.

Just how do you pronounce that Duke University basketball coach's last name? Mike Krazewski? Mike Shashjevski?

B.K., MADAWASKA, MAINE

Just sneeze.

Is Brett Hull, Bobby's son, as good as his dad? I hear the St. Louis Blues are very happy with him.

J.D., IBERIA, MO.

Bobby knew his son was going to be a hockey player just like him even when Brett was a baby in the crib. He didn't have any teeth.

Free agency would help the Atlanta Braves enormously, don't you think?

G.F., SMELTERVILLE, IDAHO

Yes. Everybody on the Atlanta roster should become a free agent and leave. That would help a lot.

The Los Angeles Lakers certainly have a fine young forward in this A. C. Green, but I don't know what his initials stand for.

R.U., CANBY, ORE.

The Laker public relations department held a contest asking fans to guess. The winners were: Apple Computer, Art Carney, Angry Customer, Amy Carter, Alabama Crimson, All Conference, and Assistant Coach. Nobody was right, though, and nobody had the nerve to ask. So, you'll have to ask him yourself. My advice? Ask Carefully.

How much did Lorenzo White mean to Michigan State coach George Perles' offensive game plan?

J.P., SAUGATUCK, MICH.

With White gone, Perles now has to design 56 new plays a game.

Are college football marching bands ever going to stop playing that doggone "La Bamba"?

B.H., SOLANA BEACH, CALIF.

I hope so. I don't listen in Spanish.

Pro golfer Amy Alcott jumped into a pond near the 18th green after a recent victory. Is she one of those people who prefers the water?

T.B., BLUE ISLAND, ILL.

No, she prefers the shore. ■

In a fever to know what really goes on in the world of sports? Will you feel awful until you find out? Send for a diagnosis to: The Good Doctor, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201—then wait patiently.

THE FAN

By ALAN THICKE

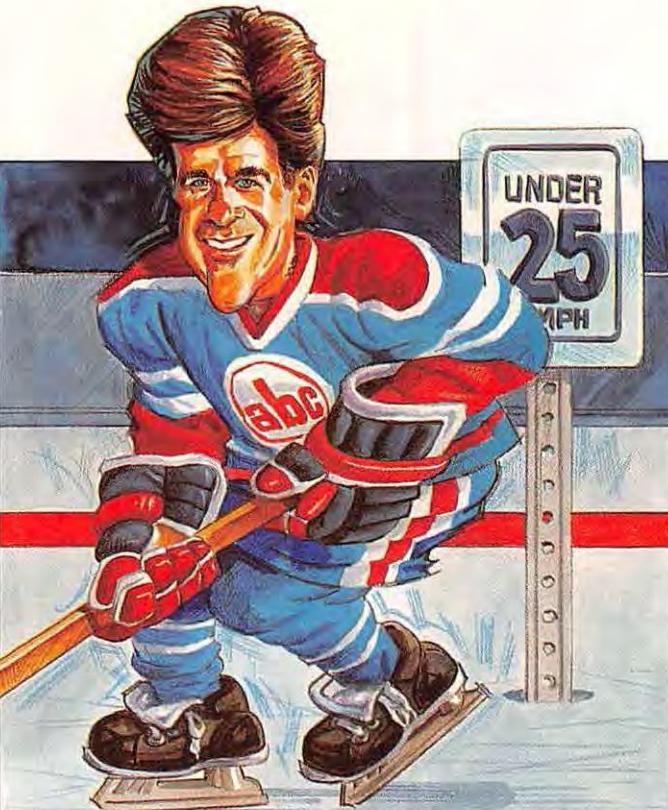
Growing Up With Hockey

SINCE I GREW UP IN the mining fields of northern Canada, I guess I was genetically bound to have a great love for hockey. The area around Kirkland Lake [Ontario] is truly a hockey hotbed, where all the kids are trying to make it to the NHL, and where the ruling fantasy was to be another Bobby Orr, Gordie Howe, or Phil Esposito.

But my feelings for the game go beyond genetics. Even if I hadn't been born into the sport, I'd still enjoy the finesse, body contact, and fluidity that only hockey incorporates. That's not the way I play it, mind you. I can only wish that . . . but if you watch Gretzky and Lemieux together, it's as if you're really watching Dr. J and Magic Johnson on skates.

You have to remember that this sport is played on thin blades. Players are taking passes and shooting the puck while hurtling down the ice at speeds of 25 mph or more. Unfortunately, the only time I travel at that speed these days is when I'm driving to the rink. But more than just the speed and playmaking of hockey, I like the body contact. Contact is fun. Hockey without all the body contact would be golf, and that's no way to let out those physical aggressions we all claim to have. There's something about a bruise that says you did something meaningful.

Don't get me wrong. When I suit up in the NHL—the North Hollywood League—I'm not going out on the ice to fight. No way. We play late at night, and after putting on all that gear, driving through terrorist neighborhoods at 11 p.m., and paying \$7.50 for my share of ice



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time, I'm not about to get kicked out of a game for fighting . . . or worse yet, bleeding.

For those of us from Kirkland Lake who couldn't make the real NHL, the second fantasy was, at least, to have your nose broken by a pro. That finally happened to me in an exhibition game last year, when an ex-Hartford Whaler caught me squarely with an elbow. A dream come true! A broken nose is not considered a good career move for an actor, but for me it was a badge of courage and stupidity that I milked for as long as I could keep my nose and eyes black and blue. However, don't let me demean my hockey skills any more than they already demean themselves.

I played in college and would have made pro except for a few minor deficiencies in passing, skating, checking, and shooting. One rule of hockey is that one's ability increases in direct proportion to one's proximity to the equator. I was subpar in northern Ontario. In Toronto I would have been

average. In Costa Rica I'd be a Hall-of-Famer. Nevertheless, to be on the ice with some of the all-time hockey greats such as Espo, Hull, Howe, and Brad Park is as good as it gets.

I've earned those opportunities not through my hockey prowess but because I'm on TV. Our celebrity team plays eight games for charities around the country every year, and we gladly take our lumps for the privilege of lacing up with these giants.

The pros are generally tolerant when we amateurs invade their ranks. In the '70s, I skated with the Boston Bruins (who were always one of the best teams) at the invitation of Bobby Orr. As a stranger among them, I screwed up a skating drill and ran, head down, into Terry O'Reilly, who's now the head coach of the Bruins. When I regained consciousness, Johnny Bucyk was part of a group glaring down at

me as I lay on the ice. "Who is that guy," asked Bucyk. "Never seen him before," replied my embarrassed friend, No. 4.

In the slapshot drill, goalie Gilles Gilbert removed his gloves and caught mine barehanded . . . while eating a sandwich! At age 39, I told Gordie Howe I might be getting too old to make pro hockey. "Bull-puckey," he replied, "you've still got twelve years left!"

If someone were to ask, "What would you have preferred, being a hockey player or an actor?" I'd say this: How 'bout a television sitcom about a professional hockey player with a wife and three kids. Otherwise, as soon as they open that franchise in Costa Rica, count me in. ■

Canadian-born ALAN THICKE, is a multi-talented performer. Aside from his hockey skills, he's an award-winning writer, producer, songwriter, and actor. Alan now plays the lead role of Jason Seaver in ABC's No. 1-rated show, "Growing Pains."